The Nation

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125th Anniversary Issue

patriotism

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Robert Bly * Walter Dean Burnham * James Chace
Ramsey Clark * Sandy Close * Richard A. Cloward and
Frances Fox Piven * Sue Coe * William Sloane Coffin
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Introduction by John Schaar

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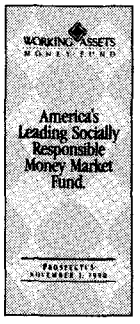

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EDITORIAL.

What Is Patriotism?

The first sentence of *The Nation*'s prospectus, dated July 6, 1865, promised "the maintenance and diffusion of true democratic principles in society and government," surely a patriotic sentiment, as was the magazine's name. The second choice—"The Union"—was thought by the founders to be too neutral. Hence, the preferred title, referring to the nation, the one that is indivisible with liberty and justice for all. As the magazine marks the conclusion of its 125th anniversary celebrations amid a host of yellow ribbons and red, white and blue bunting, what could be more appropriate than to dedicate this special anniversary issue to—of all things—patriotism? In the aftermath of a war whose opponents were often regarded as in some sense disloyal, we invited friends and colleagues to address the question of just what patriotism is and ought to be: Is there a patriotism that is not nationalistic? How does the historic internationalism of the liberal left relate to the concept of patriotism? What do you value in the traditions of your country?

John Schaar, whose eloquent meditation on patriotism ten years ago in "The Case for Patriotism" helped inform the questions underlying this chautauqua, leads off:

Nietzsche wrote that words with a history cannot be defined. Their meanings are in their stories, their biographies. That is surely the case with "patriotism." Patriotism is as pa-

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triots have done. And in relatively recent times—say, since the American and French revolutions—those who have called themselves patriots or who have called others to the banner of patriotism have largely fallen into two camps.

The first company, whose signature is on so many of the bloodiest pages of the modern age, has its spiritual roots in the radical ideologies of the French Revolution. They announced the advent of a new god on earth and a new prophet/commander whose voice was the voice of that god. The new god, of course, was *la patrie*, the nation, and the new commander was the state.

Abbé Sieyès named the new god: "The nation exists before all. It is the origin of everything. It is the law itself." By 1792, in a petition addressed to the National Assembly, the ferociously jealous claims of the new god were made chillingly clear: "The image of the *patrie* is the sole divinity which it is permitted to worship."

Those claims have echoed in a thousand variations from that day to this. It is the worship of national power, of national greatness, nearly always expressed as power over other peoples and qualities, and as power that acknowledges no limits on its own assertion. This voice has been as clamorous and continuous in our own country as in many others. The line from Col. Alexander Hamilton to Lieut. Col. Oliver North is strong and pure.

The other company of patriots does not march to military time. It prefers the gentle strains of "America the Beautiful" to the strident cadences of "Hail to the Chief" and "The Stars and Stripes Forever." This patriotism is rooted in the love of one's own land and people, love too of the best ideals of one's own culture and tradition. This company of patriots finds no glory in puffing their country up by pulling others' down. This patriotism is profoundly municipal, even domestic. Its pleasures are quiet, its services steady and unpretentious.

This patriotism too has deep roots and long continuity in our history. Its voice is often temporarily shouted down by the battle cries of the first company, but it has never been stilled. Jefferson spoke for it, as did Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr.

We should not be surprised if this voice is often heard lamenting or rebuking the country's failures to live up to its own best ideals, which have always been the ideals of the fullest possible freedom and the most nearly equal justice for all. Its specifically political ideal found its finest expression in Lincoln's "government of, by and for the people," and the American domestic patriot is often heard calling fellow citizens and their officials to this standard. That call is distinctly a citizenly call, and never more so than when, as Father Mapple's wonderful sermon in *Moby-Dick* has it, the citizen stands firm "against the proud gods and commodores of this earth" and calls every violation of the covenant to account "though he pluck it out from under the robes of Senators and Judges."

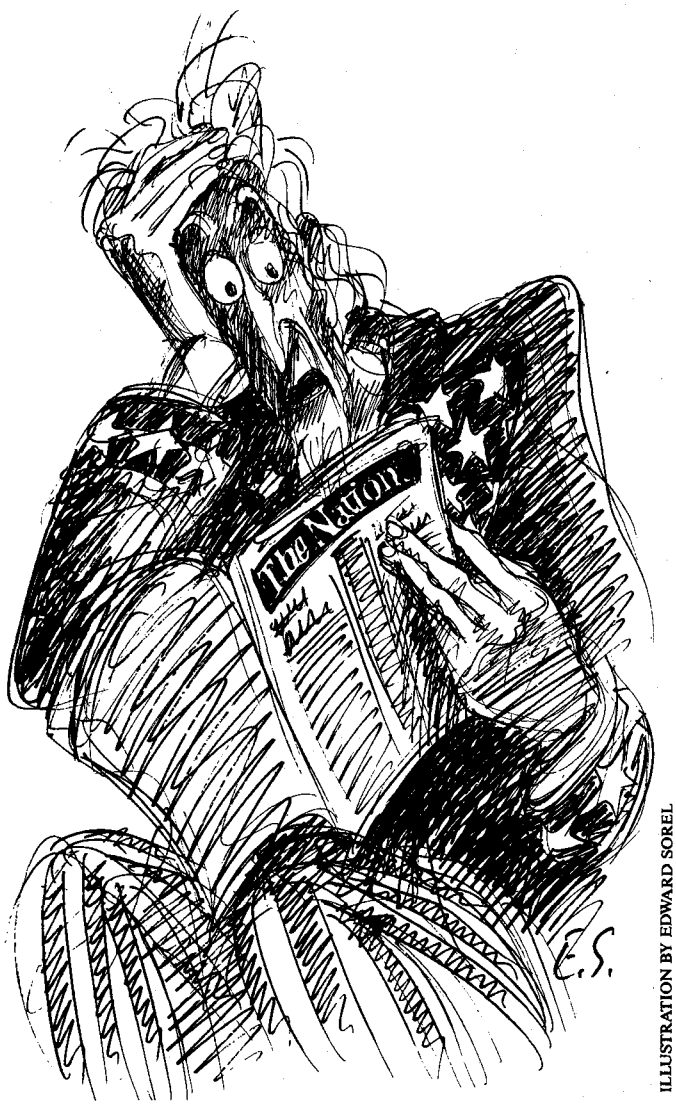
The Nation has prepared a grand Fourth of July feast for its readers. While all the contributors reject extreme nationalism and thus are members of the company of domestic patriots, that has not produced homogeneity. The glory of the gathering is its variety. There are about as many kinds of patriots and patriotisms presented here as there are writers. And that is exactly as it should be. For the chief worry about the thing called patriotism is that one or another group is always trying to grab the term, put a parochial meaning on it and impose that meaning as the only legitimate one, silencing and excluding others, denying them a place at the table.

Nor does any contributor to this Fourth of July potluck hold patriotism, even of the domestic kind, to be of the highest value. And that too is in the American grain. Father Mapple's sermon ends with the adjuration that the highest honor, the "top-gallant delight," goes to the one who is "only a patriot to heaven."

There's something at this table for everyone. Dig in.

JOHN SCHAAR

John Schaar teaches political theory and American politics at the University of California, Santa Cruz.



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To Our Readers

With this issue we begin our summer biweekly schedule.

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Floyd Abrams

Constitutional lawyer

THE LEFT HAS ALWAYS HAD A PROBLEM WITH PATRIotism. There were a few recordings: Paul Robeson's "The Lonesome Train" still resonates. There are some songs: No one has blessed America more movingly than Woody Guthrie. But as a general matter the left seems sour on America and more sour still about patriotism.

More's the pity. It's not that the right hasn't routinely substituted flag-waving for reason. Or even that a dumb, smug and myopic sort of Americanism hasn't been used to justify every national sin of which we've been capable. But none of that even begins to excuse the disdain with which the left greets even a tip of a patriotic hat. Adlai Stevenson understood that patriotism could rightly be defined as the celebration of "the right to hold ideas that are different—the freedom of man to think as he pleases." And he knew at the same time that "to strike freedom of the mind with the fist of patriotism" was "an old and ugly subtlety."

Why then, the resistance on the left to patriotic appeals? Why such a crabbed view of Americanism at its best? Why not celebrate Justice Brennan? Or Justices Marshall and Blackmun? Or the 200th anniversary of the Bill of Rights? Or a message of freedom beamed from America to the rest of the world that has often been *received* there but too often has been denigrated here?

What the left criticizes about America is often worth criticizing. Its unwillingness to celebrate what we offer the world at our best—and to call that patriotism—is not to its intellectual or moral credit.

★

Bruce Anderson

Editor, Anderson Valley Advertiser

AIN'T A THING WRONG WITH A MODEST AND PROportionate affection for the land of one's birth. I became a patriot at an early age, ca. 1948, through a series of children's books in my elementary school when I moved from the apolitical adventures of Dick, Jane and Spot to *George Washington Grows Up*, *Thomas Jefferson Grows Up*, *George Washington Carver Grows Up* and on until I myself had grown up to the inspiring tales of highly ethical athletes who fought the great moral battles of the day from the pitcher's mound. Those stories by John R. Tunis discussed the fundamentals of justice in quite realistic ways. I remember wishing at the time that Tunis's Young Razzle or Honest Abe were around my elementary school when the school principal was beating the bejeezus out of certain kids who just happened to be from poor families. By the time I reached high school I was aware there were serious discrepancies between what America said it was and what America in fact was. But there remained the promise of justice as guaranteed in the fables of my youth—the possibility that America could become as advertised. "Hell's bells," I figured, "the great crimes are committed by the people who own the place, not by me and my friends. None of it's our fault." By the time I was in my early 20s I knew from my own experience that most of my fellow citizens were decent and kind in their everyday lives even if their political opinions often severely and directly contradicted the more encouraging aspects of their personal deportment. I joined the Congress of Racial Equality in 1962 in San Francisco when I was 21. From there my journey, tiller always strong to the left, has been pretty much like that of many of the people I know and admire most, all of them patriots, all of them still trying to reconcile the theory and practice of America. I'm all for the old red, white and blue. Always have been, always will be. I hope to live long enough to help get the place back from the hijackers.

★

Lucia Annunziata

Middle East correspondent, La Repubblica

IN RECENT YEARS MY COUNTRY, ITALY, HAS BEEN OVERwhelmed by a new type of Mafia—one that has become rich through control of state money for public works. In such a role it has become a key player in public life, with the ability to push its own political candidates and to gain support from the population by giving thousands of jobs. What does the Mafia have to do with patriotism? In my opinion, what makes a supposedly civilized country like Italy unable to shake itself of this corruption of public life is a *lack* of patriotism, in the original meaning of this word: a "sense of the state," a sense of being part of a community, for which it is worthwhile to make sacrifices and act morally.

Patriotism in this version has never been antagonistic to historic internationalism. Quite the contrary; in the liberal left tradition one was the extension of the other. Today, in the democracies (and America is no exception), we see this sense of the state replaced by a jingoistic sense of one country's honor, often defined as antagonism to other countries or ideologies.

The gulf war has been a good example of this. America has fought and won without sufficiently questioning itself about present ethical issues and future responsibilities. And it has lacked any desire to understand the enemy—but that is a strategic mistake more than a moral one.

The result is that the West has—rightly—mourned its few hundred troops who died but has also totally removed from public mention the thousands who were killed. *Pietas* for the loser was shown even by the Romans in their victory parades.

The best form of patriotism today can be found every Sunday at the football game.

★

Robert Bly

Poet; teacher; author

THE YELLOW RIBBON IS THE LAST REFUGE OF A scoundrel.

Patriotism means an interest in your father, holding fathers in high regard, confronting your own father when it's appropriate, not behaving like a victim child. The

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R.O. Blechman

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It's beautiful, Lou, this patriotic outpouring.
Gorgeous. St. Louis... 13,000 yards
13,000 yards?!
That may be a problem.
Where we gonna get 13,000 yards?
Why not ship them Orange. Tell them it's the dye lot.
ORANGE, A MISTAKE? Forget it!
So what do we do?
Call around.
Hello, Honolulu Notions? This is Acme calling.
No more yellow, eh? Thank you. Have a nice day.
Hello, Panama Notions?
Barbados Box 'n Bow?!
Calgary Wraps?!
Nothing. Nada. Zilch.
Well, there's always that place in the Mid East.
What's it called? Basra Ribbons?
Basra. That's Iraq isn't it?
I think so. Can we do that?
We got a patriotic duty, Mel. Can't let St. Louis down.
I suppose
Hello, Basra Ribbons?
Hi, this is Mel Sitko, Acme Ribbons in Hoboken.
You're what?? Bombed out?? Totally?!?
Oh, I'm sorry about that. Yeah... You too... Have a nice day.
DAMN, 13,000 yards. A once-in-a-lifetime order!
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model is Cicero, who attacked Antony with biting insults while he was in the room and fought to keep the republic from becoming an empire. When a republic becomes an empire, the father sickens and dies, and being a patriot is no longer possible.

★

Walter Dean Burnham

Professor of government, University of Texas

PATRIOTISM AT ITS BEST IS THE AFFIRMATION OF certain essential human values that bond one individual to another, in what one might call a country-specific way. Patriotism at its worst is fetishistic idolatry, the worship of the tribe and hence of oneself. It is one of three great emotive expressions that mark modern history, the other two of course being religion and socialist internationalism. As has been the historic case with religion and socialism, patriotism readily lends itself to manipulation of mass publics by politicians and other elites seeking "hot buttons" to push. It is this sort of patriotism (or perhaps better, patrioteering) that prompted John Quincy Adams to comment that whenever he saw a politician start to wave the flag, he felt an "involuntary apprehension of mischief."

Patriotism is thus an inescapably, deeply ambiguous phenomenon. What does it mean to "love one's country"? Rallying around the flag can be a fundamentally valuable human response to challenge. Who can view the history of the Civil War or World War II and think otherwise? Still, there tends to be a left-right split in defining the meaning of loving one's country that parallels the two sides of this force. A relatively little rallying around the flag, viewed in historic time, goes a long way; World War II does not happen very often. But efforts to promote it are continuous, with or without anything in the environment that looks like a rational threat. The other approach, no less motivated by love of country, is more critical. The reason this is so is that important elements of our national value system promise things that the social, economic and political systems are not delivering. This gap between promise and performance in the United States centers on the structural deficiencies of a capitalist civilization and of its associated political system in the realization of those values. A patriot committed to the elevation of the human condition in the United States has ample ground within its structure of values and traditions for sustaining a critical stance. However, the tribal-worship side of the force can infinitely appeal to many or most of us. Doing the other kind of patriotism will thus always be uphill, not to mention steady, work.

What America means to me is, ultimately, the ideal of a society where no arbitrary limits are placed on anyone's ability to reach and enjoy the plenitude of his or her potential as an adult human being. The historic American accomplishment in this regard has of course often been desperately flawed along lines of race, gender and class. But it has nevertheless been mighty. We too often tend to forget this. In some important respects, this ideal is not that far removed from Marx's primordial vision; there were good reasons for his ardent support of the Union cause during the American Civil War. And it is somewhere in this plane that the best ideals of the historic left and of the American value system come very close together. Needless to say, these are all great generalities; and God, as always, is in the details. But the vision endures, and it is no mean vision either.

Perhaps I can lend a certain autobiographical concreteness to the discussion. My forebears arrived on these shores across a span of time extending from 1620 to 1878. I have been very happily married for a generation to a woman whose parents arrived here in 1929 from Ireland, where they and their forebears had endured seven centuries of imperialist and racist oppression. None of these people were rich and famous, but they generally prospered, and they did their part to build the country. Various members of this family tree served in colonial wars, the American Revolution, the War of 1812, the Civil War and World War II. I myself served in the armed forces during the Korean conflict, with distinct pride if without much pleasure. (A half-generation later I was one of many who became unalterably opposed to the Vietnam War, but I saw and still see nothing inconsistent in this.) The tree includes Protestant, Catholic and Jewish elements, and I take pride in each of these traditions.

This is after all a very American story. The United States is a palimpsest; it is always being "written over," as it becomes something else over time from what it was. Being an aggregation of every race and people under heaven, it lacks the assured cultural definition of national identity that one finds in European nation-states. That creates the space for political entrepreneurs to play a politics of divide-and-rule, a chief feature of the current regime under which we live. It also has contributed to such exercises in pathology in the name of patriotism as the House Un-American Activities Committee, Senator Joseph McCarthy and their latter-day successors. These too are American stories. They underscore why it is necessary that those with a different concept of patriotism resist all efforts by the patrioteers, those specialists in invoking the Idols of the Tribe, to control the meaning of this rich and ambiguous power in the land.

★

James Chace

Henry R. Luce Professor, Bard College

MY FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH POLITICS AS AN adult act of commitment was in Paris in 1954. After graduating from college, I went to Paris to study art history and ended up being beaten by the French police for protesting the French war in Indochina. I was quite clear that I was opposed to the war because it was a legacy of French colonialism. The French were simply "wrong": The war was immoral. Vietnamese nationalism, whether or not it was aligned with Communism, seemed to me irrelevant. As an American I stood against colonialism. That seemed to me in the American grain. F.D.R., the only President I had known in my boyhood, had opposed colonialism. French sol-

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diers were being sacrificed for a cause that had no moral backing.

But I was troubled as I pondered what I had done. For an American who was drawn, almost by accident, into the student riots and protests, the Indochina war, and especially the tragic siege of Dien Bien Phu, which ended in a French defeat, seemed to connect us to a larger scheme of suffering and judgments than we had ever known. It was not, after all, an American war. I certainly never dreamed that it would become one. It seemed to me then, and it does now, that Vietnam should have been looked upon as a region of marginal strategic significance to the United States. Even those who lamented the installation of a Communist regime should have understood that this was a consequence of French colonialism and, in any case, not an American concern.

Patriotism meant to me then, as it does to me now, that America is a nation meant for some exceptional destiny. Should we not be what John Quincy Adams urged upon us—"the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all" but "the champion and vindicator only of [our] own"? If not, Adams was probably right that we might be tempted to become "the dictatress of the world" and no longer "the ruler of [our] own spirit."

From that spring of 1954 in Paris, I began to understand that the United States has on many occasions lost its sense of itself as an exemplar of liberty. It has too often behaved as an ordinary nation, perhaps no worse than others, but also no better. Yet I can never rest comfortably with that notion. Of course, there is a grave danger in an American quest for perfection. But it has become equally evident to me that the United States cannot successfully pursue a foreign policy without a significant moral component. Patriotism in the American grain might be embedded in the idea that America must act—at home and abroad—as an exemplar of liberty. To the extent that America violates this principle, it is the obligation of the citizen to dissent. For an American, I know of no other definition of patriotism.

★

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Ramsey Clark

Lawyer; former United States Attorney General

PATRIOTISM OUGHT TO BE A PERSONAL COMMITment to make one's own country honest and just in all its acts. It should be a reasoned allegiance to the good qualities and deeds of the people, their culture, institutions and governments. A patriot should be first and most vigorous in criticizing and urging correction of his or her country's failures, omissions and wrongs. Patriotism ought to motivate the whole country to be as good a neighbor in the community of nations *as the conscience of individuals motivates them to be in the communities where they live.* Patriotism properly practiced is essential to a foreign policy seeking worldwide peace, freedom and self-determined social justice, because love of country can energize the people of a given place to a conscious, continuing commitment to compel government accountability for its role in creating a just society within the country and in its relations with others.

Patriotism as commonly practiced has been a principal cause of war and exploitation. When it proclaims nationalist superiority over others, it is racist. When it compels absolute obedience to government authority, it is fascist. The greatest moral cowardice is obedience to an order to commit an immoral act. When patriotism calls for the use of force to have its way, it becomes criminal. Might does not make right among nations any more than it does among individuals. When patriotism seduces *a* people to celebrate a military slaughter, *the* people have lost their vision.

★

Sandy Close

Executive editor, Pacific News Service

MOST OF US WOULD FIGHT TO THE DEATH IN DEfense of our own lives, our loved ones, maybe even our property. But in an era of worldwide migrations and travel, with lives in flux, borders coming down, multiple homelands and cultures, a world economy, international plagues and global popular culture, that sense of fierce attachment to one's *patria* is dying. Polls showed overwhelming public support for the recent Mideast war, but without a draft or even skyrocketing gas prices, the gulf war was hardly a litmus test for reawakened patriotic sentiments.

If patriotism is an anachronism, are there common sentiments and values binding Americans together, beyond the belief in our right to pursue our own individual happiness?

Despite the left's deepening sense of marginalization, for the first time in decades I think it is the left—the traditional naysayer—that is articulating the most widely endorsed public values in this society. Take human rights. What began as the left's effort to extend the principle of individual and civil rights to victims of state abuses abroad has burgeoned into a worldwide crusade for human rights and democracy to which even President Bush must be held accountable.

Then there is environmentalism. The preoccupation of a fringe element of the left in the 1960s, it now permeates Saturday morning prime-time TV cartoons in the form of heroes like Vine Man and the Mutant Ninja Turtles. It's possible that environmentalism has become a new secular religion.

Finally there is antimilitarism, the big "NO" of the left in the 1960s that today finds an echo even on the podiums of Washington's gulf war victory celebrants: "No one hates war more than me," Schwarzkopf told flag-waving crowds.

In earlier times espousing such universalist views would have marked one as unpatriotic (a common accusation made against leftists). Today, ironically, the values of the left are dangerously in sync with a growing consensus about the post–cold war "new world order." By championing our values, we on the left could find ourselves providing a velvet glove for America's latest iron-fist rule as new world order supercop.

The left looks not to national governments but to a genuinely global body like the U.N. to make the world safe for its values. Yet in the absence of any functioning global government, let alone transnational parties, the left runs the risk of becoming an intellectual head without a body or a heart. Even as our universalist concerns are winning over elites around the world, we find ourselves to be alienated prophets and high priests, disconnected from the mass constituencies of the poor, the oppressed and the marginal we have so long championed.

Some hint of what this gap means hit me on a recent trip to New York City to attend a meeting of leading human rights advocates, which was engaged, intense, even upbeat. The talk was of civil conflicts in distant countries. An hour later when I got off the subway from midtown, I found the stairs flanked by Guardian Angels passing out leaflets describing how to avoid assault by a screwdriver-wielding man. It struck me as ironic that those protecting subway riders were street toughs, and I thought how little intercourse there is between the human rights offices on Fifth Avenue and the downtown streets.

The gap reflects a wider political divergence: While many Americans now agree on universalist values, there is no consensus on pressing domestic issues facing the nation, particularly its disintegrating social fabric. In earlier crises, pride in nation (nationalism) served as the glue holding society together through hard times. Today many native-born Americans are particularly hard put to define what it means to be American. What growing numbers of people do now identify with are their communities—often self-defined mutual-support networks.

There's no question that I identify with the left's values. I regard due process as the greatest American contribution to a worldwide process of human liberation. Yet as a journalist—as a human being—I feel drawn to those communities on the edge holding themselves together with values not necessarily my own: black Muslim women, white teen separatists, born-again Christian immigrants.

Theirs is another movement growing in tandem with the universalist values of the left but rooted in neighborhood needs and tribal identities. The real challenge of the left is to figure out a way through the heart to those in this movement; to join the loftiness of its vision with the grittiness and loneliness of their lives. To put, as it were, the human back into the environment.

★

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Richard A. Cloward and Frances Fox Piven

Professor, Columbia University School of Social Work
Professor, Graduate Center, CUNY

WE TAKE PATRIOTISM TO MEAN LOVE OF NATION and the loyalty that follows. My country right or wrong. Even as an abstract idea, it is hard to see how thinking people justify blind loyalty. And considered historically, patriotism is plainly dangerous, helping to unleash military rampages in the name of nation and obliterating the essential democratic capacity to assess concrete and particular interests.

The ubiquitous loyalty to nation-state is puzzling. How is it that people become passionately devoted to the abstraction of the state and its symbols? Propaganda could not be the whole of it. Perhaps some loyalties are virtually natural to the human condition, such as the attachments most feel for kin and community. And perhaps nationalistic propaganda acquires the force it does because it draws on these axiomatic attachments.

Still, there is a difference. However parochial the ties that bind people to clan or place, these ties have something to do with the concrete experience of people, so that threats to clan or place can sometimes be assessed by direct experience. Not so with flag and nation. When state leaders appeal to patriotism, they mobilize citizens by invoking foreign threats that cannot be assessed by ordinary people, except sometimes when it is too late, as in the aftermath of war. In the process, not only are people made to sacrifice lives and resources to the contests of state-makers but the emotions generated overwhelm popular capacities for a reasoned and conflictual domestic politics. Never has that been more obvious.

★

William Sloane Coffin

Minister; president, SANE/FREEZE advisory board

THE WORST PATRIOTS ARE THOSE WHO HOLD CERtainty dearer than truth, who, in order to spare themselves the pain of thought, are willing to inflict untold sufferings on others. Adolf Eichmann comes to mind.

But if uncritical lovers of their country are the most dangerous of patriots, loveless critics are hardly the best. If you love the good you have to hate evil, else you're sentimental; but if you hate evil more than you love the good, you're a good hater.

Surely the best patriots are those who carry on not a grudge fight but a lover's quarrel with their country. And the main burden of their quarrel in today's and tomorrow's world must be to persuade their fellow citizens that the planet itself is now at risk, and in an order of magnitude never previously even imagined. Hence, everyone's security depends on everyone else's. No one is safe until all are safe.

The ancient Roman Tacitus defined patriotism as entering into praiseworthy competition with our ancestors. I think we should enter into praiseworthy competition with Washington

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and Jefferson. As they declared their independence from England, let us declare our *inter*dependence with all countries. Beyond saluting the flag, let us pledge allegiance "to the earth, and to the flora, fauna and human life that it supports; one planet indivisible, with clean air, soil and water, liberty, justice and peace for all."

Today our most relevant American patriot might well be Thoreau, who, a hundred years ago, said, "I am a citizen of the world first, and of this country at a later and more convenient hour."

★

Stephen F. Cohen

Director, Russian studies, Princeton University

PATRIOTISM IS NEVER HAVING TO SAY YOU DIDN'T KNOW.

★

Mario M. Cuomo

Governor of New York

LIKE MOST OF US, MY FAMILY AND I OWE THIS NATION a great debt for most of the many good things that have happened to us. So my patriotism rests on profound gratitude. But it goes beyond that. It is a love of country that calls not only for active support but also for candor and, occasionally, even tough love.

Patriotism, for me, is rooted in the belief that my country will behave in a decent and civilized manner toward those who live in it and those who live outside it. To me, that means the guarantee of a strong constitutional system that upholds the principles of freedom and protects its people; a political leadership that is chosen in open elections; a philosophy of government that reflects a commitment to helping those who can't help themselves; and a manner of relating to other sovereign nations that is governed by international legal precepts.

The term "patriotism" seems to be raised most often in the context of military action and at times has been used as a test of support for our country's military activities. But I understand it to include a respect for contrasting viewpoints, an acceptance of dissent, a tolerance—and even a welcoming—of the clashing diversity of voices that is uniquely American. In our democracy, patriotism ought not be the blind endorsement of a particular government administration, nor should it require rigid conformity to whatever the majority dictates. A proper patriotism would recognize that there are no absolutes when it comes to solving our social or international problems, except the standard by which we must judge all goals—our willingness to help one another, and to help others.

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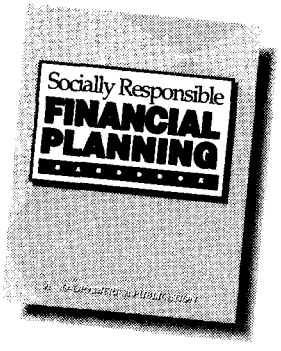

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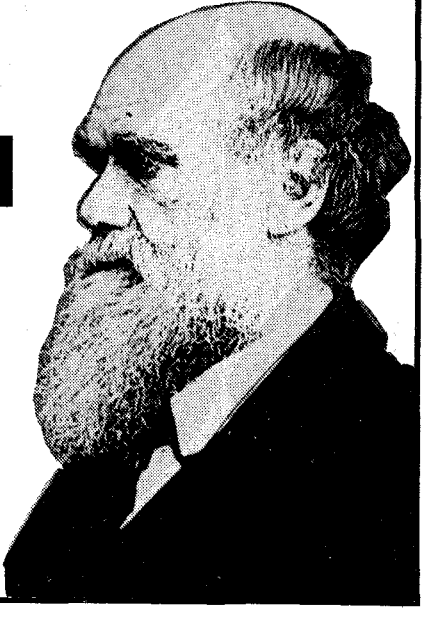

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Mike Davis

Member of editorial committee, New Left Review

PATRIOTISM?

The dead miners' kids at Ludlow,
human shadows at Hiroshima,
headless charred corpses in the Iraqi desert,
the smile on Ollie North's face . . .

★

Benjamin DeMott

Professor emeritus, Amherst College; author; critic

I'M WARY OF NATIONALISTIC PRIDE FOR THE USUAL reasons. In the first place, many make the secret assumption that, as Max Frisch puts it, "The nation to which we belong must be a model nation, simply because we ourselves happen to belong to it." In the second place, the American events, achievements and characteristic responses to life that stir me are either so remote or entangled in historical shame that the idea of a living white male taking pride in them seems, speaking mildly, presumptuous.

No matter: I admit to a residual patriotism. It arises from responsiveness to a recurring American theme: the power of the (theoretically) weak to instruct the mighty. The "texts" embodying the theme are obvious: moving passages of history (the late-nineteenth-century agrarian revolt, the great sitdown strikes, the Montgomery bus boycott), scenes of classic American novels (by Melville, James, Dreiser, Faulkner), lines of favorite American poems (by Whitman, Williams, Levine, others), heroic and lyrical jazz (from Armstrong to Getz). I see patriotism, in short, as the relished memory of the nation's best self, and would argue that, for this reason, its other name is hope.

★

Bernardine Dohrn

Attorney, Legal Assistance Foundation of Chicago

FOR OBSCURE, PROBABLY CHILDHOOD, REASONS, the ritual singing of the national anthem at baseball games is one place I have taken a stand, or rather kept my seat. As far as my children are concerned, this moment of embarrassment repeatedly presents them with a dilemma: Should they go get popcorn during the anthem? Should they agree with my protest or only with the reasons behind it? Will we be hit from behind by a beer can or worse? And after all, isn't this just a collective way of beginning a wonderful afternoon at Wrigley Field, much like the seventh-inning stretch and "Take Me Out to the Ballgame," rather than a sanctioning of American hegemony and military dominance of the world?

The longing for community, citizenship, concrete participation and a place on the globe with which one can identify—these are impulses that are authentic, nearly universal and hopeful. Yet the aspects of patriotism that hush dissent, encourage going along and sanction comfortable distancing and compliance with what is indecent and unacceptable, resting on the plunder of "others"—those aspects are too fundamental to ignore or gloss over. Just ask children: The flag and missiles have become fused.

Patriotism asks us to be a passive, consuming audience of the United States as it is. Yet our task is to dig in both locally and internationally. We are less than 6 percent of the world's people. Without the ability to identify with other peoples as equally human, we will not discover our freedom, which is linked to solidarity with others, and we will not survive.

★

Slavenka Drakulić

Yugoslav journalist and novelist

IT IS VERY DIFFICULT FOR ME TO SPEAK ABOUT PATRIotism and nationalism in this moment in the history of East Central Europe, full of nationalist tensions and conflicts and on the brink of civil war, especially in my country. I can see that everywhere patriotism is on purpose confused with nationalism, and that our feeling of love is manipulated into a poisonous hate that makes us distrust our neighbors and lovers, our friends and children, our very selves. For me, however, the difference is strikingly simple: Patriotism is love for your country that doesn't include hate for the other, whoever that "other" may be. For this is precisely what nationalism is doing to us, dividing us into good and bad Croats, Serbs, Albanians, Czechs, Slovaks, Bulgarians, Turks, Jews, Hungarians or Romanians, forcing us to take one side only.

This pressure for homogenization, for all people in the country to be one, to form a nation, is the worst thing about nationalism. Because it abolishes all individual differences, it abolishes our personality too. It reduces us to a number in the mass, to one more voice in the crowd, to one more death in the row.

I don't want to be a corpse on a graveyard of political illusions. That is why I am a patriot, but not a nationalist. As a patriot, I am free to love my country in the best way I can as an individual—a writer and novelist who cherishes her language most of all. But if I cannot do that, if I am *forced* to "love" it in a way others define that love, then I am a prisoner in my country.

★

Martin Duberman

Professor of history, CUNY; biographer; playwright

WHO *ISN'T* A PATRIOT? EVERYBODY CLAIMS THE designation and claims loyalty to the particular set of ideals and institutional arrangements they choose to identify as the essence of Americanism. Those of us who deplore the country's current descent into macho militarism refuse to cede patriotism to those who equate it with George Bush's policies. We hold to a set of values older than Bush and more enduring than a single (misguided) administration. We hold to an insistence that the needs of people come before the displays of hardware, however technologically brilliant. We hold that all human life is valuable, and that

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the view that *some* nationalities, races, religions, sexual orientations and genders are more valuable than others disgraces the notion of democracy—just as the growing disparities in wealth and privilege in our own country discredit the notion that we are the exemplars of democracy. We hold to an insistence that the rights of conscience take precedence over the profits of business. We hold to a celebration—internationally—of human diversity, and we champion the integrity of indigenous cultures over imperialistic demands for conformity.

Obviously we're the real patriots. How come THEY can't understand that?

★

Leslie Dunbar

Former director, the Field Foundation

PATRIOTS IDENTIFY THEMSELVES WITH THE FORtunes of their states. Except among aristocrats, the breed hardly existed before nationalism elbowed its way into Western societies and spread cancerously from there. *Ergo*, there is no patriotism outside the national state system. *Ergo*, it is one of the vital organs of that mortal god. *Ergo*, patriotism is a patron of warmaking. Patriotism is not compatible with pacifism, nonviolence or just ordinary peaceableness. I would not again call myself a patriot.

But at 70 (which I am) one holds on to what one can of old loves, and patriotism was one of them. I do not cheer on our foreign adventures, nor do I believe there is such a thing as "national interest," or if there is, that it includes me and persons I care for. I suspect we more likely than not would corrupt even liberating movements abroad and so would have us stop presuming to give political or economic aid. I have virtually no lingering respect for Congress and the presidency as institutions and find not many individual exceptions. I have become sour about the prospects for civility in this luckiest of all nations at its creation.

I have, however, one large hope. The nation has not yet overcome the terrible legacy of its one piece of beginning bad luck: slavery. Nor, thanks be, has it overcome—though governments off and on have tried—one piece of its good luck, the tradition of legitimacy of dissent and dissenters. That tradition has been our saving grace, and if it matters to others to call my love of it patriotism, I'll not object.

★

Richard Falk

Professor of international relations, Princeton University

CONFUSING PATRIOTISM WITH UNCONDITIONAL SUPport for government policy does core damage to the meaning of citizenship, especially during time of war. In 1736 Lord Bolingbroke identified the essence of patriotic fervor as devotion to the public good, whether as official or citizen. To uphold a policy that is believed harmful to the country is then, with such an understanding, highly unpatriotic, exhibiting either weakness of spirit or fear of consequences.

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Wartime accentuates the pressure to be a patriot, especially if one's country is in physical danger. At such times of national emergency, arguably, unity may be relevant to survival. U.S. wars since World War II have not been of this character. These wars have been distant encounters in the Third World, of dubious legality and morality. It is the appropriation of the symbols and language of patriotism for such wars that poses a profound challenge to our political identity.

Admitting the predicament of young people conscripted or professionally obliged to take part in an improper war in such a circumstance has nothing to do with patriotism. Indeed, a patriot may express solidarity with fellow citizens caught on the battlefield by working hard to oppose a war or bring it to a rapid end. It was a mistake often made in the Vietnam era for opponents of the war to confuse their opposition with expressions of contempt for Americans in the military, as if they were responsible for the war policies. Supporters of the war tended to make the opposite mistake, blaming the soldiers subjected to the hell of Vietnam for the loss of the war.

Straightening out this mistake might have been one of the few bright spots to emerge from the Persian Gulf war. But the Bush effort to honor and praise the troops asked to risk their lives on the authority of the elected leaders was deliberately confused with enthusiasm for the war and a celebration of the battlefield victory. That confusion repeats the Vietnam mistake in the guise of correcting it. By seeming to associate battlefield results with our attitude toward the soldiers taking part is to build war fever into military victory and shame into military defeat. To mingle patriotic fervor with militarism is pernicious and dangerous for us all. As citizens in the nuclear age we must struggle harder to convince others that the true patriot is now, above all, dedicated to peace and justice, to diplomatic solutions and to a foreign policy respectful of international law and of the United Nations so long as it acts within its own constitutional mandate.

That much seems obvious. What is more difficult is to give patriotism a positive content in America at this time. Despite the outcome of the cold war, it is more evident than ever that capitalism is cruel in its human effects, especially here in the United States, and has entered a phase in which market forces are weakening welfare gains. The disquieting popularity of Desert Storm with the people confirmed an ugly violent streak that cannot be explained away as media manipulation. It is one more reminder that the dispossession and destruction of the Indian peoples of North America is not a matter of history, buried in the past. The massacre of the Iraqis fed the same political imagination that was threatened by the "savages" in the wilderness. Patriotic energy is required if we are to overcome such a bloody legacy, compounded many times, including by the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It is doubtful whether, even if we could come to face our past as honestly as, say, the Germans have faced the horror of the Holocaust, there would be much occasion for reaffirming a nationalist pride as the basis of a reformed patriotism. Especially given the power and wealth of the United States, our pressing need is for nationalist humility and the forming of a more global political identity that is engaged in the great work of solidarity with peoples everywhere, first of

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★

Howard Fast

Novelist; columnist for The New York Observer

PATRIOTISM IN ITS MOST COMMON USAGE IS BEST defined as the last refuge of scoundrels, who label every infamy and abomination as patriotism. Let me list some of the things these above-mentioned scoundrels define as patriotism:

Fighting wars of aggression thousands of miles away.

Fighting wars of colonial oppression.

Poisoning the atmosphere with auto emission and pollution and acid rain.

Ruthlessly destroying the forests.

Promoting racism as a means of winning elections.

Cutting away at civil rights.

Lying about every question of the public good.

Bleeding the people dry and destroying all that America stands for with an armaments industry large beyond reason or need.

Spending our wealth on armaments while our cities crumble, our infrastructure disintegrates and our schools are left without teachers.

I could go on and on, but what the hell! What they call patriotism down there in Washington stinks to high heaven of brainlessness, racism, greed, fear and hatred of the common people. Internationalism, brotherhood, a left-liberal approach to life—all these can only enhance the well-being of any and all countries. Patriotism, however, as a word, applies to true love of one's country and a code of conduct that echoes such love.

★

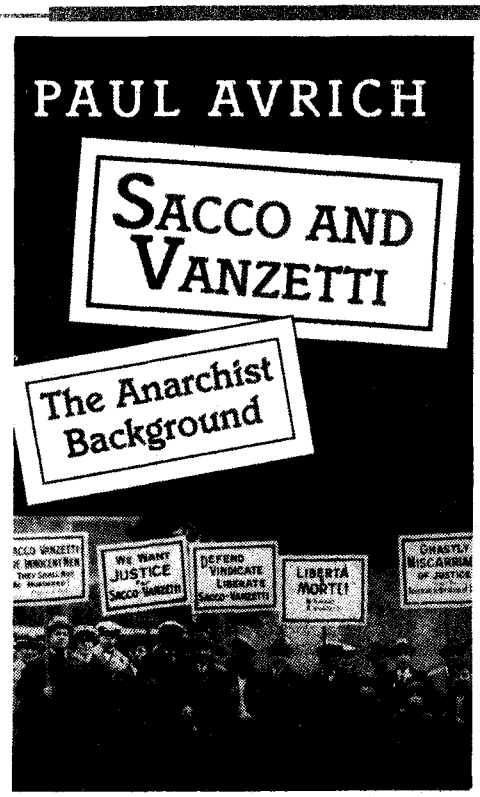
W.H. Ferry

Social critic; philanthropist

PATRIOT: "ONE WHO LOVES HIS COUNTRY AND zealously supports its authority and interests. . . ." Ah, yes. But this doesn't get us very far, does it? "Authority and interests . . . " Pretty marshy territory, this. Just as good for Iraqis as for thee and me? Can we distinguish, for example, between American patriotism and Iraqi fanaticism?

Patriotism seems almost always to come into the conversation via war or threat of war. At once one senses bugles and troops nearby and blood and bombs and general mayhem not far away. Considerations of patriotism seldom enter arguments, however fiery, about the income tax or trade balance with Canada.

My neighbor's car and fencepost exhibit yellow ribbons. At this moment he's identifying American "authority and interests" with delight in the Persian Gulf slaughter. To me it has been an ignoble exercise and one that another generation



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will recognize as a bloody and needless chapter in our history. He is proud of our achievements in the Persian Gulf. I am ashamed. We differ about American authority and interests here. Can we both be patriots at the same time? Indeed, has patriotism anything whatever to do with these contradictory opinions? We surely differ about the importance of bloodshed as a proper measure of authority and interests.

Patriotism has come to mean hallowed sentiments about Old Glory and the Pledge of Allegiance and victory parades. My patriotic neighbor, vastly in the majority to be sure, wants his country's authority and interests asserted by carnage. I see my country's authority and interests immeasurably better served by attention to the well-being and general welfare of its citizens.

I conclude that patriotism is at best threadbare, a useless word. Its ambiguity makes it inflammatory. What is needed is a word to convey citizenly pride when one's country behaves virtuously. Patriotism is too bloodstained to meet such occasions.

★

David Fromkin

International lawyer; author

THE ONLY PERSON WHO, AT THE HEIGHT OF THE cold war, appeared on the postage stamps of both the United States and the Soviet Union was Garibaldi, a patriot for all countries, who fought for the independence of Uruguay as well as for that of his native Italy. He refused the offer of a command in the Union army only because Lincoln hadn't (yet) proclaimed the abolition of slavery, and he led French irregulars against Germans in the Franco-Prussian War.

Nationalism, which began with the left in the revolutions of 1789 and 1848, was a liberating force only insofar as (like Garibaldi's) it was infused with the Golden Rule: that each nation demand for all others whatever it claims for itself. And of course that wasn't the way it went; once unleashed, nationalism proved illiberal, inspiring the massacre of minorities and the subjugation of neighbors.

It also was parochially European. Africans were divided into tribes and Middle Easterners into sects, and the European attempt to fit them instead into countries has left them troubled and troubling. Nationalism was unmodern: Today nation-states are mostly too small to be economically viable. And it is dangerous: With nuclear weapons, unbridled nationalism will get us all killed.

But nationalism is too powerful to be ignored. The future may be federalism in large single-market areas: governments within governments. At the federal level there could be a single currency, with economic, financial and environmental regulation; at the local level, self-rule. A federal constitution and judiciary allow nationalities full expression only insofar as they don't invade the rights of minorities or neighbors. Perhaps that's the answer—if there is an answer.

★

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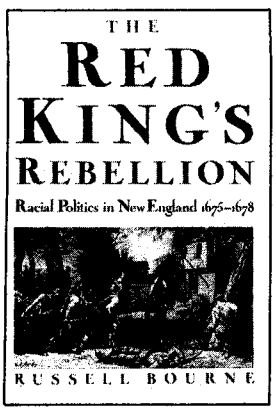

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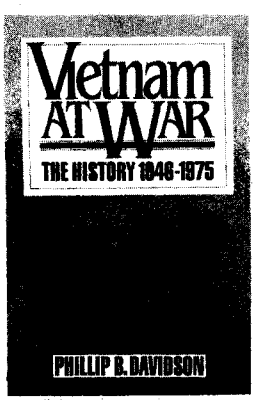

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Carlos Fuentes

Novelist; essayist; diplomat

THOMAS MANN AND ALEXANDER Solzhenitsyn were considered disloyal for questioning the political justifications of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Would they have been more patriotic if they had shut up and joined the ticker-tape parades? A society that demands unanimity and disguises it as "patriotism" is a society that has lost its bearings. It runs the risk of losing democracy in the name of patriotism, which then truly becomes Dr. Johnson's "last refuge of a scoundrel." If patriotism is a value, it manifests itself quietly, in acts of care and solidarity, in love for things both great and minute in one's heart, but without ever ceasing to discover the values one loves at home in other peoples and in other lands. But patriotism is more voice than silence, more criticism than irrational approval. You only criticize what you care for. Criticism and dissent can be a greater act of love than cheers and raised fists or stiff-armed salutes.

Nations are, Ernest Renan said, "a daily plebiscite." Eric Hobsbawm reminds us that nationalism is, relatively, a historical novelty; it steps in to replace the lost ties of tribe, family or clan. So "the nation" and "nationalism" are transitory concepts. The question is, If today they are fading, what will we substitute for them as binders of individuals and society? Will the web of global economics substitute for the nation-state as practiced, say, in France since the time of Colbert, in the United States since the time of Jefferson, in Mexico since the time of Obregón, Calles and Cárdenas? Where does the nation-state cease and Sony, Xerox, I.B.M. or Siemens begin? And can the planetary integrated economy coexist with the revolt of the ethnics and the return of the religions? Progress, and thus the concept of the nation-state and nationalism, have ceased to become linear conceptions. The new and the old, the living and what we thought dead, are suddenly meeting on the same ground. Our mental and political habits must change accordingly.

But whatever happens, we shall have to answer for our wounds. That is why my preferred definition of nationalism is Isaiah Berlin's first of all: Nationalism is a

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response to a wound inflicted upon society. Will the society of the twenty-first century respond to its inevitable wounds no longer with patriotism or nationalism but with cold calculation, cultural commotion or death and devastation? No amount of parades, cheering and acting like suckers about a war that changed nothing except the innocents it killed will alter this challenge.

★

Henry Louis Gates Jr.

Chair, Afro-American studies, Harvard University

I WAS 23, STUDYING LITERATURE AT CAMBRIDGE UNIversity and listening with growing indignation to a fellow student—a Nigerian educated in England—hold forth about racism in "your country." In America, he was saying, blacks are victimized, downtrodden and lynched on every corner of every street. And they are all on welfare, scrounging for morsels in the trash to fend off starvation. And . . .

"I don't know where you get your figures," I finally broke in, bristling, "but according to the most recent statistics, most black people in America are *firmly* middle class." Even as I lied, the blood rushed to my face, betraying me. The truth was, I couldn't believe the things I heard myself saying: Racism in America? Pooh, what racism?

Dr. Johnson's gibe notwithstanding, it's at moments such as these that you learn the difference between "auto-critique" and, as it were, "allo-critique." Conservatives often challenge the good will of those to their left who take their country to task for its failings. (Don't you people have anything nice to say? they ask.) Why task our society for its sexism—aren't the Zulus as bad or worse? They don't understand that critique can also be a form of commitment, a means of laying a claim. It's the ultimate gesture of citizenship. A way of saying: I'm not just passing through, I *live* here.

In an essay titled "The Discovery of What It Means to Be an American," James Baldwin writes about coming to Europe to find out that he was "as American as any Texas G.I." (The revelation, he says, caused "a species of breakdown.") Baldwin, one of the great American Jeremiahs, cannot be accused of a narrow nationalism; yet so much of his writing is motivated by a deep concern for a nation whose failings he castigated. And more than that, as Baldwin noted in "Stranger in the Village," by a recognition that weaknesses and strengths are not always unrelated:

> One of the things that distinguishes Americans from other people is that no other people has ever been so deeply involved in the lives of black men, and vice versa. This fact faced, with all its implications, it can be seen that the history of the American Negro problem is not merely shameful, it is also something of an achievement. For even when the worst has been said, it must also be added that the perpetual challenge posed by this problem was always, somehow, perpetually met.

I wonder if my Nigerian classmate would have conceded the point.

★

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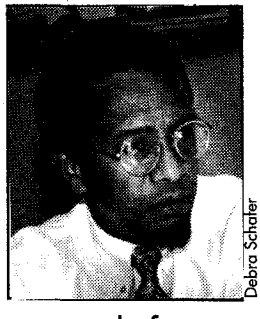
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Ira Glasser

Executive director, American Civil Liberties Union

AS SAMUEL JOHNSON NOTED, PATRIOTISM IS OFTEN used by grasping politicians as a cloak for self-interest. Sometimes the American flag itself has been used as a cloak for self-interest by those who wrap themselves in it even as they act to undermine what the flag represents.

But there is another kind of patriotism, reflected not so much by devotion to the flag as by a commitment to the founding principles that the flag represents. "Patriotism" is a strong word and generates strong emotions; we ought not abandon it to those whose purpose is to undermine the founding principles, such as those codified in the Bill of Rights. Supporting those principles is what ought to characterize American patriotism, and we should contest our adversaries both for the definition of the term and its proprietary use.

Liberty means that even in a democracy the majority cannot be allowed to rule everything. Rights require the establishment of legal boundaries for democracy itself, forbidden zones of freedom where individuals reign supreme and where the government, and majoritarian preference as well, may not prevail.

The Bill of Rights, flawed as it was by slavery and lesser imperfections, was adopted because the original citizens of the United States insisted upon it. Those are *our* traditional American values. Our brand of patriotism consists of fighting for those values and insisting that they are the essence of what it means to be an American. It is up to us to make patriotism a synonym for freedom of conscience and expression, fundamental fairness and equality.

★

Robert E. Goldburg

Rabbi emeritus, Congregation Mishkan Israel, New Haven

I'M A PATRIOT AND PROUD OF IT, WITH THREE FILES TO prove it. The first of these was printed on the stationery of the House Un-American Activities Committee in the early 1950s and distributed by the so-called Connecticut Committee against Communism in the parking lots of the temple that I then served as rabbi (Congregation Mishkan Israel, New Haven), and throughout the city and the state. The other two files were obtained by me years later, thanks to the Freedom of Information Act, passed during the Administration of President Jimmy Carter.

Sources of inspiration that compelled my conscience were, among others, the Judaic heritage of social justice based on the Hebrew prophets, the American Bill of Rights and the example of other clergymen like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Rev. William Sloane Coffin. In an issue of *Harper's Magazine* (September 1947) Henry Steele Commager said it all, and his words are as eloquent and relevant now as then. The essay's title was "Who Is Loyal to America?"

> What is the new loyalty? It is, above all, conformity. It is the uncritical and unquestioning acceptance of America as it is—the political institutions, the social relationships, the economic practices. It rejects inquiry into the race question or socialized medicine, or public housing, or into the wisdom or validity of our foreign policy. It regards as particularly heinous any challenge to what is called "the system of private enterprise," identifying that system with Americanism. It abandons evolution, repudiates the once popular concept of progress, and regards America as a finished product, perfect and complete. . . . It has not yet learned that not everyone who saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven. It is designed neither to discover real disloyalty nor to foster true loyalty.

★

Vivian Gornick

Author; reporter

THE WORD "PATRIOTISM"—WHICH I ASSOCIATE TO blind love of country—does not echo in me. But feminism made me an American. Let me explain.

I grew up in New York, the child of working-class immigrants, devoted to a Marxist vision of international socialism. In our house the injustices of class far outweighed the virtues of the democracy. True, we were lucky to be making our struggle here, on *this* section of the map rather than on many others we might have found ourselves on, but America as an emotional reality did not go deep. When we marched in May Day parades and hecklers told us to go back where we came from, we replied in perfect confidence, "This is *our* country. We're more American than you." But we didn't really mean it. Honest dissidents speaking out of a true love of country was not what we were about.

In late adolescence I grew away from the family passion. Socialism no longer explained my life to me. I joined the culture of urban intellectual Jews. New York became my country. When I went abroad I saw that brash expectancy, directness of speech and a strong sense of social fluidity all marked me as an American, but the recognition was not centering; rather it disoriented, made me feel odd, lonely.

In the early 1970s I became converted to the feminist analysis, and slowly a surprising thing began to happen. Instead of taking my place on the feminist spectrum somewhere near the Marxists, I found my politics growing out of an America that had taken root inside me without my knowledge or consent. Looking now with opened eyes at indigenous sexism, I found myself thinking, "This is my country. I'm more American than you." And this time I meant it. It seemed to me, then, that every fifty years or so another section of the body politic rises up here to demand its share of the democracy, and in the act of demanding demonstrates both the systematic exclusion and its native sense of right. I felt myself at the end of a long line of American populists. I *felt* the struggle between capital and the individual as I had not since childhood—how long its history, and how alive it is in this country.

It's the live quality of the struggle that I prize. The thing that makes me feel American.

★

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Robert Grossman

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Stephen Jay Gould

Professor of geology and zoology, Harvard; author

THIS MAY SOUND PARADOXICAL, BUT I MOST VALUE our tradition of having so few firm traditions—so much so that we must use real men (Franklin, Lincoln) rather than ancient mythic figures as our legends. This fluidity can lead to a frightful anti-intellectualism, but at least we gain hope that rapid change from any position of profound ugliness is possible. The despised of one generation can become the heroes of the next—a needed suppleness in this greatest experiment with democracy (in terms of racial and cultural inhomogeneity) ever attempted in human history.

★

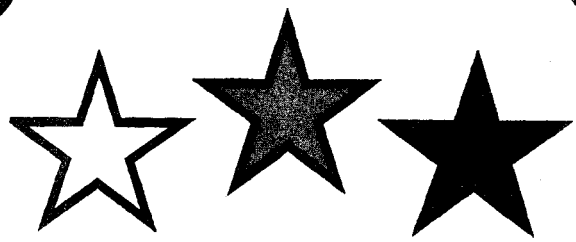
Philip Green

Professor of government, Smith College

THE HISTORIAN ERIC HOBSBAWM HAS WRITTEN THAT the first duty of an Irish intellectual is to oppose Irish nationalism, the first duty of a Jewish intellectual is to oppose Jewish nationalism, etc. I think that is right, if we mean by "intellectual" anyone whose thought has matured enough to see through the partiality of claims about group solidarity, and the speciousness of appeals to violence. As an American intellectual, therefore, I insist on telling the awful truth that American imperialism is a knife at the world's throat, and that our public life has the moral tone one would expect to encounter at a convention of armed robbers. (As an American Jewish intellectual I also am especially critical of Zionist imperialism; I suspect, though, that if I weren't Jewish I would think of Israel as just one of many equally wretched American client states, and not as bad as some—Iraq, for example.)

However, I would add a crucial proviso to Hobsbawm's epigram. The alienation of the critical intellect is justifiable *only* if it takes the stance, so to speak, of a disillusioned lover, rather than of a straight-out misogynist (or misanthrope). One must have been in love with *la patrie*, and come out the other side. And something ought to remain. I have a friend who roots against Americans (at least, white Americans) at the Olympic Games. That seems sad to me. The principal of your high school may be a creep, the schoolyard dominated by bullies, and black students shunned at the senior prom, but you shouldn't root for it to lose the Big Game. It's still your very own high school, which you loved.

What is the content of that initial love? It will vary for everyone. My patriotism was formed by World War II and a popular-frontish education typified by a textbook called *Building America*, which treated American history as a series of cooperative actions by united farmers and workers, culminating in the C.I.O., the National Farmers' Union and the New Deal. It lasted through the ambiguities of the cold war, and was put paid only by the Vietnam War (helped by readings in William Appleman Williams). Vestiges of it still remain: The Scandinavian welfare state may be infinitely more civil than American brutalitarianism, but I understand per-



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fectly why the Eastern European revolutionaries were thinking of American, not Norwegian, democracy as they tore down the Iron Curtain. De Tocqueville was right: In some ways, the United States has always been the only real democracy; our activist traditions still have unparalleled vitality.

Still, I have to ask myself what could possibly serve as inspiration for the patriotism of someone born in, say, 1969. Recently, after a particularly depressing class discussion, a student asked, "Why do you live here, Professor Green?" I could have answered that question as above, but she was really asking about herself, and that's a lot harder. What has she ever known but an era of greed and bellicosity; a governing party that stands for contempt, bigotry and violence, joined to an "opposition" that kneels in uncaring exhaustion; and a nation that bestrides the world like the Los Angeles police force in Watts? I can still hunt in the cemetery of American history for the stolen cadaver of popular, patriotic *and* nonimperialist democratic activism. And I can understand the frustrated militaristic nationalism of a people for whom nothing in our society works well except our armed services. But how, finally, can either of us relate at all to the popular imperialism of the yellow ribbons?

★

David Halberstam

Author; journalist

WE HAVE ALWAYS TAKEN PATRIOTISM SERIOUSLY in our family and we have always thought it, not unlike religion, a relatively private thing. Charley Halberstam, still a kid, was a medic in World War I and saw a good deal of action. Because the doctors thought he was bright and eager, he went, with their encouragement, back to school after the war and eventually became a doctor. When World War II began he returned as a combat surgeon at age 43 and served once again in France and Germany. Involuntarily expert on the carnage of war, he absolutely hated jingoism. Among generals, he liked Bradley and was wary of MacArthur (because of the latter's speeches rather than his

Hans Haacke

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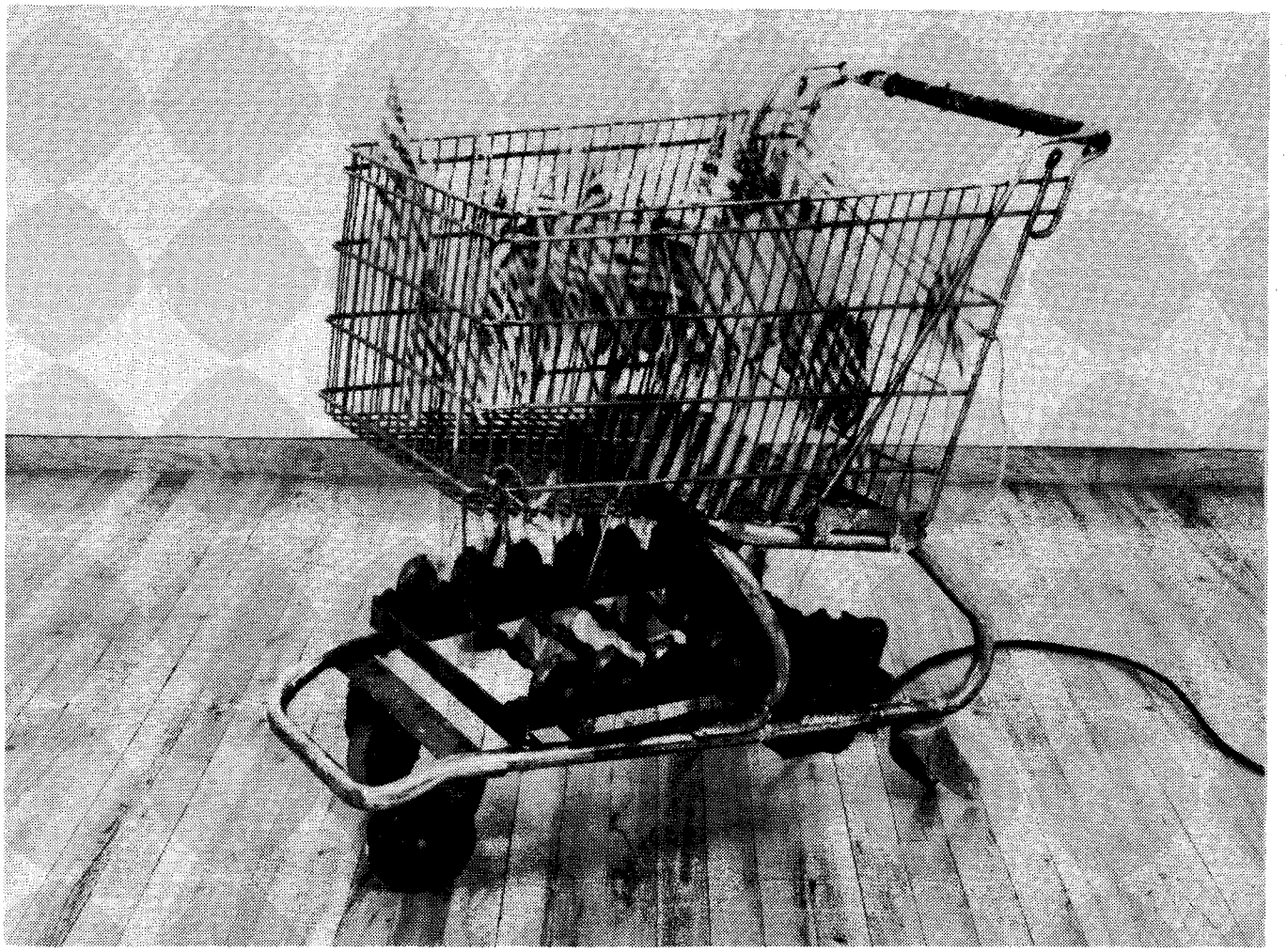

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rather careful use of his men in World War II). He had a particular loathing for the politics of organized veterans' groups.

His was a handsome legacy: His sons never doubted that we were good Americans and that we were entitled to the right to dissent. When I was a young reporter in Vietnam taking a good deal of very meanspirited heat for not being sufficiently patriotic, I thought often of him and remembered that he had always taught me to stand up for what I thought was right. As such I have ended up admiring brave men and women who have been in combat, and men and women who are equally brave in their willingness to go against the grain of a society on other issues—I think often of the heroism of the early civil rights workers. I have grown up over the years with a belief that the braver the individual in combat, the less likely he is later to talk about his military past or to make a political career exploiting it, and in particular tying it to hawkish political views. Little of what I have seen in American politics in the past twenty years has disabused me of that.

I have a private belief that patriotism in a nuclear age is almost beyond comprehension, and that regional wars are a great deal more political than most people think. While (after the Persian Gulf war) I was pleased to see the military achieve a proper and healthy respect from the society at large, I was also made uneasy by the Super Bowl quality of cheering by the general populace, cheering as they did the sacrifices of other people's children—I had a sense of a kind of no-fault patriotism at work in the land.

★

Tom Hayden

Member, California State Assembly

WHEN MY FATHER APPROACHED DEATH, HE wanted two things: to express love for his family, and to be buried with an American flag. He was, in short, a patriot. He wanted to be remembered as belonging to a family and to a national grouping. So do I. We cannot live just as isolated individuals, nor as part of abstract humanity. We need roots, boundaries, a sense of place, institutions that allow our particularity to be expressed. Most cosmic religions and messianic ideologies founder on this simple reality. The danger is when the state and nation no longer stand for broader values but become values in themselves. Patriotism becomes idolatry, and those who hold to its original values are outcasts. The challenge ahead is whether we can, through the environmental crisis, feel a depth of connectedness with the planet itself that has not existed since before the nation-state. I suggest we will get there only through patriotism, not by rejecting it. Although I opposed the Persian Gulf war, I was moved that when General Schwarzkopf was asked what he would like to do next, he mused about the environment and conservation. What President Bush and John Sununu fail to understand is that many Americans want patriotism to mean more than standing up to Saddam Hussein. It also means zero dependency on Persian Gulf oil and medieval monarchs; no more sacrifices of young life on behalf of gas-guzzling cars;

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★

Hazel Henderson

Editor at large, World Paper; *syndicated columnist*

AS A NATURALIZED AMERICAN CITIZEN I TAKE MY patriotism very seriously. Today, more than ever, patriotism involves seeing the United States within the realities of ever-closer global interdependence. Narrow-based patriotism can only blind the United States to the truth that all nations coexist on a fragile, crowded planet. Today, this narrower view is complemented by a sense of allegiance to the earth itself, as the life-support system of all humanity. Planetary citizenship and a more expansive patriotism can better serve all nations as they seek a safer, more cooperative "new world order" for the 1990s and the next century.

Traditions and values that attracted me to become an American citizen are: commitment to human rights and democracy; individual opportunity; cultural, ethnic and racial diversity; and pluralistic goals.

★

Hendrick Hertzberg

Editor, The New Republic

THE TROUBLE WITH PATRIOTISM, AS SOME OF US tend to see more clearly when we contemplate its foreign versions (Iraqi, German, Serbian, Russian, etc.) instead of its domestic one, is that it's so damned irrational. To be for "us" just because we're us is to embark on a path that, too often, leads to being against "them" just because they're them. This is the sort of thing that makes for wars and other forms of unpleasantness.

Thanks to the odd nature of American nationality, however, American patriotism—potentially and sometimes actually—has a leg up on the nasty foreign kind. American nationality is not based on a mystique of blood and soil. It's not based on a commonality of race, religion or even (tellingly) "national origin." It's based quite explicitly on civil and political values: liberty of expression, democratic political institutions, civic equality and a secular state.

Those values pretend to be universal, which is why even the most enlightened forms of American patriotism can fall prey to self-righteousness. But they actually *are* universal, which is why patriotism can be legitimately felt, and legitimately invoked, by the liberal left—whose mission is, or ought to be, to get the country to live up to them.

Still, patriotism can be put to very dark uses. Understanding this, and cherishing American political values more because of their universality than because of their "American-ness," liberals find it relatively uncongenial to deploy patriotism in the political arena. But as the fight over flag burning showed, the higher forms of patriotism are capable of prevailing over the lower.

★

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John L. Hess

Journalist; writer for The New York Observer

AS I WRITE, MY COUNTRY IS CELEBRATING THE great Iraqi turkey shoot—the latest and, I fear, not the last of a long history of crimes against humanity. One is born a member of a family and of a people, and one tends to vaunt their virtues and bury their sins. This is universal; it has been said of the Germans that only the innocent feel guilty. Many nations today threaten their neighborhoods and the world's environment, but none with such violence as ours. To correct course is a patriotic duty, but far more than that, it is a matter of survival.

★

Warren Hinckle

Journalist; editor; edited War News *during the gulf war*

CARL MARZANI, A PREMIER LEFTIST, TOLD ME THIS story that makes America great:

Back in the political dark years of the '50s, Marzani was rushing to publish Harvey Matusow's *False Witness*, a red-scare kiss-and-teller in which a Commie-namer recanted his little nasties. The book had leaked to the press and was appearing daily in newspaper headlines in the Cheltenham and bad Bodoni typefaces that decorated front pages in those days. Marzani's regular printer telephoned him and said he was very embarrassed and sorry, but the F.B.I. was in his office warning of the potential consequences of printing this book and he would have to pass. Marzani took a truck to pick up the book, which had been set in hot type and was in metal page forms ready for the press. He drove to another printer. The F.B.I. followed him, the same warning was issued to the printer, and the printer said he wouldn't touch it. *False Witness* was suddenly hot cargo. The usual printers of leftist agitprop wouldn't return Marzani's calls, and everywhere he drove along the Eastern Seaboard with his load of type the F.B.I. stuck with him as closely as the stamp to the envelope. Marzani couldn't get anyone to print *False Witness*. In desperation he tried a printer in Philadelphia, an unbridled capitalist and ferociously right-wing Republican who was a retired Navy admiral. The right-winger told Marzani that he wanted cash up front to print this junk, which the leftist publisher was only too happy to pay. Marzani was still counting out the cash to the dour proprietor when the F.B.I. arrived and delivered its spiel. The admiral heard the agents out, then said, "Is there anything illegal in printing this book?" Well, not exactly illegal, said the senior agent, but the bureau didn't consider it in the best interests of the country that— The admiral stopped him short. "Then get the hell out of my office," he said. "This is America and I'll be damned if I'm going to have any s.o.b. from the government telling me how to run my business!" *False Witness* was in the bookstores the next week.

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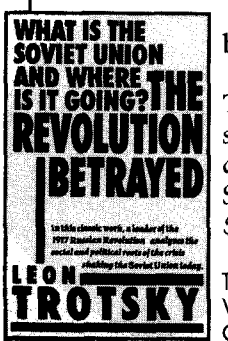

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Christopher Hitchens

Author; journalist; Nation *columnist*

THIS IS A FEAST AT WHICH AN ENGLISHMAN CAN only be a specter. But certain truths seem to me to be self-evident. As the world's most successful multinational society, the United States does well to have a Constitution that blocks the ascendancy of any one national or religious faction. The easy resort to violence overseas is, of course, antithetical to the spirit and letter of the Constitution. Historically, also, it has depended upon the kindling of emotions that can only be termed chauvinistic. No one who cares for the integrity of the founding principles of the Republic, in other words, can afford to be anything *less* than skeptical when the summons to war is sounded—most especially when it is sounded in the distinctively British-imperial tone of the late unpleasantness in Mesopotamia.

Patriotic and tribal feelings belong to the squalling childhood of the human race, and become no more charming in their senescence. They are particularly unattractive when evinced by a superpower. But ironies of history may yet save us. English language and literature, oft-celebrated as one of the glories of "Western" and even "Christian" civilization, turn out to have even higher faculties than used to be claimed for them. In my country of birth the great new fictional practitioners have in their front rank names like Rushdie, Ishiguro, Kureishi, Mo. This attainment on their part makes me oddly proud to be whatever I am, and convinces me that internationalism is the highest form of patriotism, which is what I had intended to say in the first place.

★

Molly Ivins

Columnist, Dallas Times Herald

THE TIMES I FEEL A GREAT RUSH OF AFFECTION for this country are almost always touched off by either the land or the people. I love the land and I usually think of it in terms of the West, because that's where I've spent most of my life. I love the Texas Hill Country, the Big Bend and the endless space around Lubbock (truly an acquired taste). I believe the east rim of the Grand Canyon is sublime, the Grand Tetons almost heartbreakingly beautiful and, another acquired taste, the Red Rock country of southern Utah has grown on me over the years. Southern Louisiana and northern New Mexico are other favorites.

It's silly to generalize about 250 million people, but I dearly love the spunk, irreverence and let's-get-her-done practicality of so many Americans. Ted Morgan, a writer who had the misfortune to be born French, not one of life's lighter crosses, and the good sense to become an American, once observed that the charm of Americans is that whenever we are confronted with any given problem, we immediately mount horse and charge off in 360 different directions. I have a great relish for the ensuing stampede. As Marianne Moore once said, "It is an honor to witness so much confusion." I am fond of the terminal common sense of Midwesterners, the dotty charm of Southerners and the relish with which Texans approach damn near everything.

I tend to be suspicious of patriotic spectacle because I dislike being emotionally manipulated. "Reelly big shews," like the '84 Olympics in Los Angeles, remind me of Hitler's Nuremberg rallies. And, God knows, we have had enough sleazy politicians wrap themselves in the flag and use patriotism to cover up their sins to make the entire nation cynical. Carl Jung said that sentimentality and brutality are "sisters," never very far apart. I must confess, however, to a weakness for Fourth of July fireworks and John Philip Sousa marches. I find the Lincoln Memorial by moonlight almost unbearably moving, and I was thrilled when the tall ships came into New York Harbor on the Bicentennial Fourth of July.

I believe patriotism is best expressed in our works, not our parades. We are the heirs of the most magnificent political legacy any people has ever been given. "We hold these truths to be self-evident. . . ." It is the constant struggle to protect and enlarge that legacy, to make sure that it applies to all citizens, that patriotism lies. When some creepy little shit like Richard Nixon (whose understanding of the right of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the government for redress of grievances is so profound that he proposed to send teamsters thugs and murderers out to "break the noses" of antiwar protesters) becomes President, our heritage is diminished and soiled in such an ugly fashion.

Vote, write, speak, work, march, sue, organize, fight, struggle—whatever it takes to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity. Ran across one of our good guys right at the end of the last session of the Texas Lege, just a few weeks ago. He said he felt like a country dog in the city. "If I run they bite my ass, if I hold still, they fuck me." Calling all country dogs: It's a helluva fight.

★

Jesse L. Jackson

President, National Rainbow Coalition

ONE AFTERNOON IN GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROlina, when I was 9 years old, my father was raking leaves. The man came outside to offer us a drink of water, and when he left I asked, Why does that man speak differently from us? "He's German," said my father, and he stopped and leaned on his rake. "He's German. I fought in Europe so they could have freedom. I'm proud to be a veteran of that war." His eyes clouded over. "But now he's here, and he can vote, and I cannot. I helped free his people, now I'm raking his leaves."

It is a paradox of the human spirit that even after such brutal oppression and disregard for human rights, we are still so patriotic and love our country so much. It is our land; we cultivated it and helped to build it. But it is not our government. Indeed, fighting for a better government is the patriotic thing to do.

America at its best guarantees opportunity, and so fighting to expand the horizons of oppressed people is an act of patriotism. Yet too often, those who dare expand our nation's

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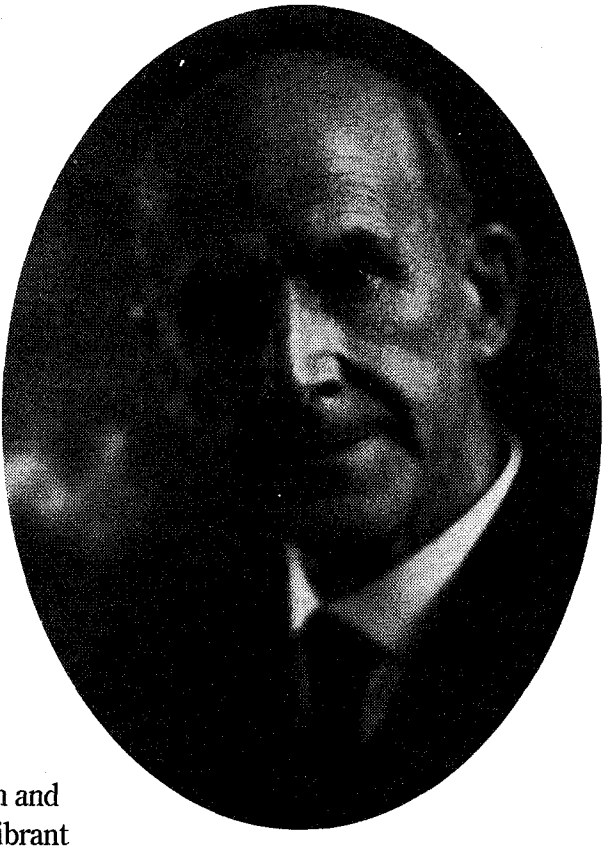

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democracy and make it true to its principles are victims of naked aggression, aggression led not by street fighters but by the White House, Congress and the courts. The founding writers of the Constitution envisioned a nation in which people of African descent were three-fifths human, in which their own mothers and daughters and sisters had no right to vote, in which Native Americans had no right to live. Thomas Jefferson expressed the American dilemma when he wrote:

> For in a warm climate, no man will labour for himself who can make another labour for him. This is so true, that of the proprietors of slaves a very small proportion indeed are ever seen to labour. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just. . . .

Through patriotism we have made America better. We have gained the right to vote. Women and African-Americans have changed the course and character of the nation. And my father's faith in his country has been sustained in the lifetime commitment of his family to make America better. Yet those who have fought for the highest and best principles of our country, the true patriots, have been vilified and crucified. The true patriots invariably disturb the comfortable and comfort the disturbed, and are persecuted in their lifetimes even as their accomplishments are applauded after their deaths.

Today, politicians are proud to pronounce that we have abolished slavery. But in its time, slavery was the political center, and abolitionists were punished for their moral strength. Today, politicians hold up the gains of women. Yet in its time, denial of the vote to women was the political center; the women's suffrage movement sought the moral center, and was punished for its patriotism. Those who fight for civil rights, open housing, environmental laws, peace and international cooperation, and veterans of domestic wars—the real patriots—receive no parades.

We must never relinquish our sense of justice for a false sense of national pride. "My country right or wrong" is neither moral nor intelligent. Patriotism is support for the highest ideals of the nation, not for whoever happens to be in the White House. As citizens we must continue to fight for justice and equality so that we might make a better nation and a better world. We must give credence to our invitation: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free," for the character of our nation is rooted in the affirmation of these ideals for all of our people.

★

Erica Jong

Novelist; president, Authors Guild

PATRIOTISM IS A RADICAL DEDICATION TO THE ideals upon which one's country was founded: an ability to see through ephemeral issues to enduring ones; to hold course in the midst of political storms; to retain one's commitment to free speech in the midst of war hysteria. Patriotism (as opposed to the kind that is the last refuge of a scoundrel) essentially is an ability to see the sweep rather than the blips of history. It is rare in any age.

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JUST BETWEEN US, WE ARE FORCED TO ADMIT THAT of all the laws known to humankind—governmental, moral or otherwise—the one that irks us the most is the law of gravity. Therefore, while still in the Soviet Union, we began work on a weapon capable of creating earthquakes at any point on the globe. Our first experiment was conducted in Jerusalem, from which place we caused an earthquake in the south of Germany. We sent a telegram to Helmut Schmidt, assuming all responsibility for the disaster. Understandably, the chancellor did not answer us, and since then we have mostly preferred to work anonymously. Those skeptical of our seismological powers might prefer to interpret these acts as a continuation of a national tradition among Russian intelligentsia to take responsibility for all that happens in our time. A few years ago we had the opportunity to combine this Old Russian tradition with New World patriotism. We were obliged to inform the Ayatollah Khomeini of the true cause of an earthquake in Iran: the desire to hasten both the release of the American hostages and the issuance of our green cards. Not long afterward in our mailbox we found not an answer from the Ayatollah but a letter from the American Immigration authorities, notifying us of our receipt of permanent residence status under the "third preference"—i.e., as particularly important figures of international renown in science and culture!

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Randall Kennedy

Professor, Harvard Law School

PROGRESSIVES SHOULD BE UNASHAMEDLY PATRIotic. To be patriotic means to love one's country. Progressive politics, with its imperative concern for social justice, is certainly animated by such love. Every desire or idea is susceptible to degeneracy. Patriotism, of course, is no different. It can all too easily degenerate into a narrow, aggressive chauvinism. But that does not have to happen. If progressives work hard to define patriotism properly in the various contexts in which it becomes an issue, we might be able to prevent patriotism from again becoming the captive of the right.

Some may contend that there is a contradiction between patriotism and internationalism—love of one's country and love of the world. There may sometimes be tension between the two. But that tension is no more insidious or avoidable than other tensions that stem from the fact that every person and group embodies multiple identities that give rise to various allegiances. A person may be at the same time a resident of a neighborhood, a citizen of a state, a citizen of a nation, a citizen of the world, a member of a race, a member of a gender, a member of a church and a backer of a party. Which of these associations should be the most important at any given moment cannot be answered fully in the abstract but must await the crucible of a concrete controversy.

★

Margot Kidder

Actress; antiwar activist

NATIONALISM IS ARCHAIC. IT BEGAN IN THE LATE Middle Ages and it died with the advent of CNN. The world is no longer divided into different colored squares; it's divided into corporations and geographical blocks of poverty. A black American in the ghetto has more in common with an Albanian peasant than he does with George Bush; an unemployed steelworker in Pittsburgh fights the same despair as a Soviet dockloader. And the whole planet is fighting for survival.

Nationalism means polarization between nations. We can no longer afford it. The mood of confrontation that exists today has given rise to an unprecedented level of public anxiety. The key to reversing the trend of distrust, and to our ultimate survival as a species, lies in visibly changing the biases held by the populations of each country toward one another—biases originally inspired by nationalism.

Superior military defense is irrelevant; we have to address the causes of insecurity and instability all over the world: the destruction of the environment, the lack of adequate food, overpopulation, disease, uneven distribution of wealth. In a world where nations are interdependent in so many of their dimensions, security and survival cannot be argued as a purely national proposition.

In order to improve prospects for peace and environmental survival the solution must be global in scope and in perspec-

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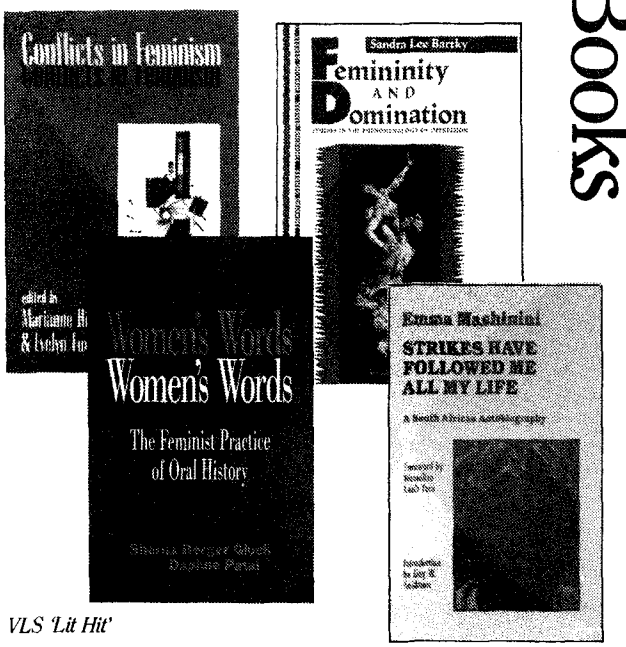

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tive, and such an approach must be dictated by the complex interlinkage of disarmament and conservation and development. So far, our own nationalism has led us to the foolish selection of militarism over economic humanitarianism, patriotism over global cooperation.

On Earth Day, so long ago, for one instant the world recognized the need for a human community that surmounted national borders, a community that chose the forces of conservation over the forces of destruction. The world recognized the need for internationalism, an advocacy of commonality of interests between nations.

Haven't the patriots been reading the news? The age of nations is past.

★

Erwin Knoll

***Editor,* The Progressive**

THIS FOURTH OF JULY, AS ON SOME TWENTY THAT preceded it, I'll join with family and friends to celebrate America's revolutionary heritage. It's something we started doing when Richard Nixon and his pals were sporting American flag pins in their lapels. Damn it, we thought, it's not *their* flag, it's not *their* country, and we're not going to let them steal America from us.

So we get together on the afternoon of the Fourth—it has never rained on *our* parade—to do all-American things (drink beer, eat hot dogs) and to recall, without rhetorical excess, that this country has a great radical tradition. We nail facsimiles of the Declaration and the Bill of Rights to a tree, and I've noticed that once in a while someone actually ambles over to read them.

It's a peculiarly ambivalent institution, this Fourth of July party of ours—part observance, part parody. A couple of years ago, when flag burning was the idiotic issue of the moment, a friend brought his own flag to burn. Some thought it was a fine way to mark the Fourth; others demurred.

That ambivalence is symbolic of my own mixed feelings about the attitude or set of attitudes we call patriotism. I can invoke the usual heroes from the left's pantheon—Tom Paine and Sojourner Truth, Gene Debs and Jeannette Rankin—and for their sake proclaim myself a patriot. Or I can summon up the monstrous crimes committed in the name of flag and country and denounce patriotism as the root of much of the world's evil.

I'm one of those unreconstructed leftists who still get a lump in the throat on those increasingly rare occasions when someone plays the "Internationale." It may turn out, in the long run, that one of the major crimes committed by the Stalinists was to give internationalism a bad name. I think it's still the way for humanity to go.

"It's a great country," my late friend and colleague Milton Mayer used to say, and then he'd add, under his breath, "They're *all* great countries." That, in a few words, sums up the trouble with patriotism: It's an absolute claim in a world where few absolutes make any sense. And to invoke the absolute of patriotism as a rationale for killing and dying—as

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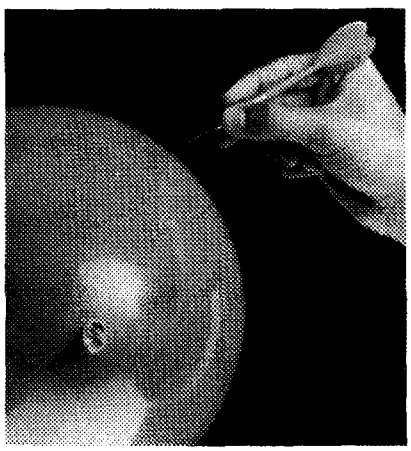

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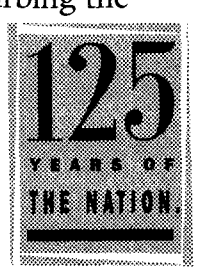

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it is perpetually and horribly invoked—makes the least sense of all.

Still, I suppose we'll go on with our Fourth of July party. A twenty-year tradition isn't lightly discarded in this rapidly changing world, and it *is* a great party. They're *all* great parties.

★

Paul Krassner

Editor, The Realist; writer; performer

A GYNECOLOGIST AT A REPRODUCTIVE CENTER IS talking to his client, a poor African-American woman who is pregnant but can't afford to raise another child.

"This is absurd," he tells her. "The Supreme Court gives me the right to burn that American flag but takes away my right to give you medical advice. Well," he says with a fiendish grin, "I've *had* it!" He gets the flag in the corner of his office and brings it to his desk. "Sometimes," he says, "an act of civil disobedience can be the highest form of patriotism." And he proceeds to write on the flag with a Magic Marker: "Abortion. Dr. Burnhill's Clinic. 825-9143." Then he hands the flag to his patient and says, "Here, bring this home with you. And after you read what I've written, burn the flag. Don't worry, it's perfectly legal."

However, the woman decides to save the flag for the next Welcome Home Troops parade, where, unfortunately, a police officer happens to notice the message on her flag. He calls in a handwriting expert, federal funds are held back and the reproductive center is finally forced to close down.

The moral of this story is: You can wrap yourself in the American flag, but it doesn't mean your ass is covered.

★

Corliss Lamont

Author

PATRIOTISM IS THE UNWAVERING DEVOTION OF AN American to the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights in the local community and the country at large, supporting the rights of dissenters throughout the nation and with loyalty to the ideals of international peace and world cooperation for the happiness of all humanity.

★

Ring Lardner Jr.

Screenwriter; novelist

PATRIOTISM IS NOT INVARIABLY A SIN, BUT IT SHOULD never be ranked with the virtues. In an ideal world, with a federal government in charge of all planetwide concerns, there could be the same kind of friendly competition among nations that now exists among our states. There would be no threat, except perhaps to the truth, in the Venezuelans claiming more scenic attractions than the Norwegians, or the Sri Lankans boasting about the health benefits of their climate, while the Gambians advertised the absence of a personal income tax.

In the sadly imperfect world we actually live in, the most dangerous manifestation of patriotism is the assertion of superiority, whether based on some fancied inherent traits of a particular national grouping or on a political system and historical role that are seen as better than those of other countries. The danger can become fatal when it leads to the delusion that the "superior" country has a moral obligation to punish offending ones and use its military might to establish a "new world order" in its own image.

I believe there are very few American patriots who are content to enjoy their own "better" life while most of the rest of the world remains in poverty and degradation. Much more prevalent is the wish that even the wretched of the earth could rise to our level and have all the blessings we possess. The only trouble with this vision is that it would raise the total earthly pollution level to twenty-five times the amount America now produces, and the entire planet would be unlivable in a few short years. Five billion people would have an automobile apiece and no descendants.

For that reason, a farseeing American patriot would devote himself not to helping others consume energy the way we do but to exploring all the ways of cutting our own consumption. In so doing he would expand the scope of his patriotic devotion from his country to the world.

★

Jesse Lemisch

Professor of American history, John Jay College

NO, PLEASE, NO MORE WARMED-OVER POPULAR-front stuff, with quotations from Paine, Jefferson, et al. about how *we* are the true patriots. It's not a case of "nobody here but us Americans." We offer something *different*; let's figure out what it is and express it without subterfuge, in languages that make sense to those who do not share our views.

In particular, let's present such clear alternatives as: a spirit of community and collectivity (which nonetheless respects the individual), an opposition to competitiveness and a vision of an internationalism that opposes jingoistic patriotism. (Claiming that we are the true patriots leaves patriotism itself unquestioned.) But some aspects of American traditions should be on our agenda. A recent visit to the U.S.S.R. brought home to me the appeal of some things that the American left sometimes scorns: constitutionalism, with its promise of fairness and predictability, and material goods. Freedom from want and a desire for cornucopia are deep human longings, and we must get over the puritanism about having material things that is expressed in our indiscriminate dread of "consumerism." Otherwise, we risk falling out of touch with most of humanity. Finally, the collapse of Communism can free us of a terrible albatross, leaving us unshackled to develop a program that relates to reality rather than to superimposed abstraction. Let's trade in our tired Marxisms and attempt to

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develop a humane democratic left, infused moreover with broader feminist insights about power in human affairs.

★

Sanford Levinson

Professor, University of Texas Law School

IS THERE A PATRIOTISM THAT IS NOT NATIONALISTIC? From one perspective, the answer is obviously no. The very notion of patriotism is linked to the *patrie*, one's homeland, which is presumably distinct from other (and all too often presumptively inferior) places. Still, there are more and less *völkisch* patriotisms that therefore differ in their degree of nationalism. The worst form of nationalist patriotism is one that depends on genealogical linkage both with a particular land and with a dominant religious or ethnic group within that land. Another way of making the point is to say that such countries are true nation-states, in which the political state is also identified with a particular nation, and "patriotism" becomes the undifferentiated loyalty to the amalgam. Different readers can supply their (un)favorite examples. I would offer Japan as a continuing example of such nationalist patriotism.

But American patriotism, it seems to me, is at the other end of this spectrum. The United States is not to this day a genuine nation-state. Rather, it remains a conglomeration of various groups who come together in an uneasy political relationship organized around central symbols of liberal democracy. Patriotism in this country thus becomes more explicitly ideological, and less simply land- or birth-oriented than is the case elsewhere. Patriots—"true Americans"—are identified by their commitment to the political values at the center of American ideology: a mixture of democratic political forms and relatively unrestrained free-market capitalism. To the extent, of course, that the American state—and, more particularly, the definition of "national interest" as enunciated by its leadership—is identified with the maintenance of such values, then ideological patriotism often enough, as with the recent Persian Gulf experience, becomes translated into the idiom of nationalist celebration.

"Liberal left" is a misleading term. If this is meant as a reference to the socialist or, especially, communist left, then it is clear that for many the kind of ideological patriotism referred to above was exemplified by devotion to the Soviet Union as the presumed incarnation of socialist values. We also know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that those countries most identified (often by themselves) with the historic left have been more than willing, when the occasion warranted, to invoke some of the most mischievous forms of nationalist patriotism. The more genuinely liberal (or democratic socialist) left has, I would like to think, been more suspicious of the claims of any given political state or nation to incarnate in some spe-

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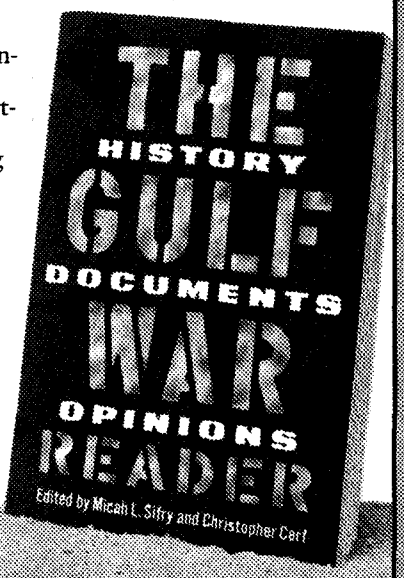

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cial way all that is true, good and beautiful. Certainly the German socialism of Willy Brandt seems refreshingly free of nationalistic patriotism.

I am the son of a Polish-Jewish immigrant (I refuse to remove the hyphen and thus endorse the vicious "nationalist patriotism" that denies that a Jew could be a "genuine" Pole) and the grandson of a Romanian Jew. Neither of my parents was able to go to college, and my father, when he died, was an exceedingly struggling owner of a small dry-goods store on the brink of bankruptcy. I have been the beneficiary of extraordinary opportunities, including significant financial aid, and I have been able to experience a life that is rich and varied. I say this not with personal pride (for there are now many people more deserving than I ever was who are without the opportunities for educational financial aid that were so copious in the 1960s, when I was lucky enough to be coming along) but in recognition that there are extraordinarily few (if any) countries in the world that have "traditionally" offered so much opportunity to people who are not part of the dominant "national" majority. I value the remarkable inclusiveness of the American tradition even as I spend much of my time teaching about the limits to that tradition and the great national shame surrounding our historical mistreatment (particularly though obviously not only) of African-Americans. I reject the view that one must be either an American celebrant (who thus focuses only on the inclusiveness) or an American rejectionist (who focuses exclusively on the unjust and despicable aspects of our tradition). The task of the American patriot is to be able to feel genuine pride in (aspects of) the American achievement while attacking a complacent belief in its sufficiency. The model here, of course, is Martin Luther King Jr., at least some of whose strength came precisely from his ability to summon up the best of the American tradition and to make his listeners feel genuinely guilty if they did not, as true patriots, try to become better as Americans.

★

Robert Jay Lifton

Director, Center on Violence and Human Survival

SCRATCH A RADICAL CRITIC AND YOU FIND ENORmous affection for this country. The affection has to do with the Jeffersonian First Amendment tradition and a certain crazy, mixed-up cultural pluralism and intellectual energy that many of us draw upon. It matters to me that I could engage in civil disobedience against the Vietnam War without having my university appointment threatened. My anger toward my country for what it is doing is an expression of care and concern. It is also a way of rejecting the temptation of despair.

★

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M.G. Lord

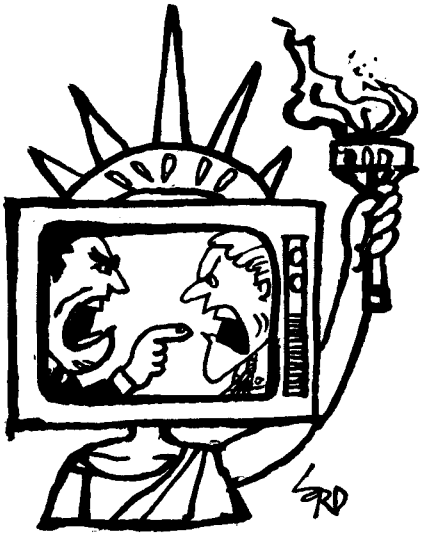
Cartoonist and columnist, New York Newsday

ONE OF THE CHARMS OF THE BILL OF RIGHTS IS that it permits a congenitally seditious creature like myself to be considered patriotic. And I suppose I am patriotic—though not in a jingoistic, confining, rigidly nationalistic sense.

My patriotism stems from a commitment to the freedoms preserved by that precious little list tacked on to the Constitution. It stems from a commitment to pluralism, and the conviction that however revolting I may find certain opinions, those opinions have as much right as my own judicious ones to be expressed.

As a political cartoonist, I have a vested interest in preserving an environment that promotes a diversity of opinion. My mother's first cousins had the misfortune to come of age in what used to be the German Democratic Republic. During the visits I made there before the collapse of the Berlin wall, I couldn't help noticing that my skills—drawing malicious pictures of national leaders and putting compromising words in their mouths—would not have secured me a sinecure at an East German newspaper. They would have secured me a cozy cell in an East German slammer.

To me, the most vital symbols of what makes America great are those Sunday morning television shows on which people with opposing views try to outshout one another. Forget the flag, forget the Statue of Liberty—I'd sacrifice my life to preserve *The McLaughlin Group.* True, the decibel level may cause hearing loss, but that is a small price to pay for freedom.



★

J. Anthony Lukas

Author; journalist

WHEN I THINK OF PATRIOTISM, I THINK OF A JULY Fourth in Gowrie, Iowa. In the tumultuous summer of 1968, *The New York Times* asked me to find a celebration someplace where traditional patriotic values still prevailed. So I spent the day in the rustling shade of Gowrie's elms, attending an oompah parade and a baseball game, and listening to oratory from a senatorial candidate who called for "the quiet men of America, the true patriots" to repudiate the "kooks and extremists."

To an outsider, it was easy to trace Gowrie's patriotism to its parochial isolation from the nation's racial and youthful unrest, indeed to dismiss such heartland ceremonies as the reflexive yawp of wounded Middle America.

And yet one couldn't gainsay the emotional tugs that nourished this civic ritual, rooted in deep-seated myths: the self-reliance that sent Gowrie's Swedish founders across the plains, the fierce sense of community with which they hewed their town from the wilderness, the powerful notion of free men in a free land.

The liberal left makes a grievous mistake when it fails to recognize our fellow citizens' legitimate need to identify with their national heritage. Months after Gowrie's celebration, Richard Nixon exploited the patriotism of countless Gowries across the land to launch a Republican hegemony that would hold the White House for nineteen of the next twenty-three years.

If this summer's hoopla over the Persian Gulf blitzkrieg seems a cheap tactic orchestrated by that still-Republican White House, we should beware of another easy put-down of patriotism. There is plenty in our nation's past with which we can identify. If we continue to abdicate patriotism to our political foes, we do so at our peril.

★

Peter Marin

Essayist; novelist

'Tis of thee, of thee I
sing a song of six
packs pocket full of rage
kill them goddamn dark-skinned gooks
and purify the age.
O fatherland, fatherland,
blatherland, botherland—
the pure absurdity of it
as if laws or lines
scrawled on a page
define the heart of a people
or the journey of the mind
through its proper country: *flesh.*
I pledge my, I pledge my
legions of the flag
behind mad Ahab white as sin—
patri / o / patri / o / jism
leaving its pale sea-weed skein
on the dead girl in the weeds . . .
Jism and Jill went up the hill
wondering who was left to kill
waving old-glory from a windowsill—
here come the boys on parade.
And once in a Tijuana bar
on a Sunday afternoon

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when the whores weren't working
I saw two American sailors
jitterbugging with a pair of women
forgetting everything but motion,
and how I loved my country then,
for the first time in my life.
It's freedom-fighters in railroad Alabama towns,
it's the vets home from Nam hating the war,
it's the homeless walking out the last open door—
that's my only nation, that furious rebellion,
that never-was innocence soon to be lost
and the knowledge that *equal* equals *all*.
Failed liberty! How we might have loved thee!

★

Hanoch Marmari

Editor in chief, Ha'aretz, *Tel Aviv*

A BITTER ARGUMENT BROKE OUT WHEN THE FIRST Scuds hit Tel Aviv: Should those who immediately packed up their families and fled to safer haven be considered defectors from the battlefield? Should those who stayed—proudly displaying on their car windows stickers proclaiming "I stayed in Tel Aviv!"—be tagged as the true patriots? The dispute divided old friendships and tore apart whole families.

They were all patriots: The teenagers who continued surfing, despite the rough seas and the missile threat; the old woman next door who stayed because she had nowhere else to go to. The so-called defectors, the ones who preached external loyalty, all reacted with the same sense of anxiety and fierce solidarity when the sound of the alarm was heard. One's innermost sense of Israeli identity emerged when it was announced that international insurance firms increased their rates for those who foolishly still insisted on coming here.

As time passed people adapted to the daily routine enforced on them by the missiles. Those who left gradually began to return to their homes. Schools reopened, and some glimpse of a night life could again be discerned. The announcement that the war was over found the city living a seemingly normal life, but under a mantle of a deep-rooted anxiety and perhaps also fear.

At long last the gas masks were returned to their boxes and the masking tape that had been used to seal the rooms was brutally pulled off windows and doors. We folded that clumsy contraption, made of metal and nylon, that was supposed to save our baby's life. The walls of his room again became solid, after seeming fragile and useless for such a long time. The old apartment building where we live, which made us wonder whether it would be able to protect us, again assumed its usual forthright dimensions.

Foreign companies again began landing their airplanes at Ben Gurion Airport. The first tourists, carrying their backpacks, arrived. Foreign television crews folded up their equipment, looking for the next newsworthy place to go to. The families of diplomats, who had left minutes before the ultimatum expired, were back. Insurance rates decreased again. We could stop being patriots. For the time being.

★

Ruben Martinez

Staff writer, L.A. Weekly

THE THIRD WORLD NOW INHABITS THE FIRST: LATIN American, Asian and African popular cultures tropicalize the asphalt jungles of our major cities. The reaction? Read *The Dartmouth Review.* Race- and class-based battles will rage, but the "Internationale" will be repopularized by Boogie Down Productions, and on the eve of the dawn of the twenty-first century streams of graffiti-piecers, street vendors, day laborers, homeless, crack *cumbia* bands and Salvadoran veterans of the Washington, D.C., uprising will storm the White House; we'll revindicate those words that the Statue of Liberty beacons out to the rest of the world, the democratic idealism that this country was founded upon but has never quite lived up to. I am a patriot only in proportion to how much we are allowed to live up to that ideal, which, at its heart, is internationalist.

★

Colman McCarthy

Syndicated columnist, The Washington Post; *teacher*

THREE OR FOUR WEEKS INTO EACH SEMESTER OF A course on nonviolence I've been teaching for nine years I figure the students are ready for an educational jolt. I ask them to read Leo Tolstoy's 1896 essay "Patriotism, or Peace." The Russian was 68 at the time, with *War and Peace* thirty-five years behind him.

"Patriotism cannot be good," Tolstoy wrote. He linked it to military violence. "What produces war is the desire for an exclusive good for one's own nation—what is called patriotism. And so to abolish war, it is necessary to abolish patriotism, and to abolish patriotism, it is necessary first to become convinced that it is an evil."

I have yet to have a student—out of some 3,000—who had previously read Tolstoy's essay. That's about the same number as those who had ever broken ranks to consider the proposition that patriotism is a sham and an evil. It may take time—for students or anyone—to see the truth of that. While waiting, other realities, ones mentioned by Tolstoy, are on view as recently as the Pentagon's parading of its weapons down the avenues of Washington: "So long as we are going to extol patriotism and educate the younger generations in it, we shall have armaments, which ruin the physical and spiritual life of the nations, and wars, terrible, horrible wars, like those for which we are preparing ourselves, and into the circle of which we are introducing, corrupting them with our patriotism. . . ."

So jolted, students' minds are opened. They begin thinking about the choice posed by Tolstoy, between patriots and peace.

★

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Mary McGrory

Columnist, The Washington Post

MY PATRIOTISM IS OFTEN QUESTIONED BY READERS. I come down to saying that I think it is possible to love my country without loving its wars. That's pretty defensive, but if you saw my mail, you would know why. I also tell them I will match my love of country with that of any of those hearties in the Administration who are sending Americans to war having declined to serve in one themselves. I refer to the Secretary of Defense and the Vice President particularly.

★

Seymour Melman

Professor emeritus, Columbia University

FOLLOWING *WEBSTER'S,* A PATRIOT IS "ONE WHO loves his country and supports its authority and interest." Loving a country implies a love for its people. But what about support for a country's "authority and interest"? Interests are not homogeneous and uniformly distributed. Occupational/class groupings display major variation in interests and concerns. Thus the interests of top managers of government and corporations are different from those of working people—of all grades. Still, top decision makers of national establishments/ruling classes identify the interests of a country as a whole with *their* interests. Thus "defense" has little to do with insuring popular self-rule. Defense forces to insure the decision-making power of the nation's ruling class are "patriotic" (as in "what's good for General Motors is good for the country").

The decision-power needs of the ruling class are built into the very language that we use. That leaves us unable to express affection for the ordinary people and for institutions that embody democratic self-rule.

Conventionally, patriotism is tied to the beliefs and rituals of the state religion, in which the state is a god and its top managers and senior military officers a priesthood. This state religion has patriotic rituals, such as parades, that mask the system of authoritarian control by proclaiming affection for the country as a whole.

Can patriotism be given new meaning? Perhaps, by replacing uncritical subordination to class hierarchy with democracy in the workplace and in the wider society.

★

Natalie Merchant

Lead singer, 10,000 Maniacs

PATRIOTISM ASKS THAT WE EMBRACE A UNIFIED America, yet no simple vision of America can accommodate its diversity. Few of us are able to call ourselves native; most of us trace our family lineages to nations great distances from these shores. With passing generations we are "assimilated," yet our former cultures are never fully relinquished. The heritage we retain and the characteristics of the one we adopt intermingle; we are defining and becoming American.

The acceptance of a common historical view may be considered the cornerstone of nationalism, yet when I consider the most broadly accepted view of history I realize that my America is quite different. In my America Columbus was not a benevolent explorer who happened upon an earthly paradise that yielded itself bloodlessly to his will. In my America the native peoples of this continent were not hostile savages, unprovoked to violence against the benign European colonialists. In my America the tobacco exports of the newborn Virginia settlement addicted a world to a powerful drug to secure a market and survival. In my America the capture, torture and enslavement of a race is unforgivable. In my America the blood and sweat of millions created an industrial power, and fortunes for relatively few.

In my America there is a hope that democracy is not forever destined to be corrupted by wealth influencing power. In my America women will no longer need to fight to possess themselves. In my America the basic rights of *all* its citizens must be respected, and this respect extends beyond borders. And in my America the burden of world power will be accepted more gracefully, with the people of the United States learning to recognize their brothers and sisters worldwide.

There is one tradition in America I am proud to inherit. It is our first freedom and the truest expression of our Americanism: the ability to dissent without fear. It is our right to utter the words, "I disagree." We must feel at liberty to speak those words to our neighbors, our clergy, our educators, our news media, our lawmakers and, above all, to the one among us we elect President.

★

Jefferson Morley

Political correspondent, Spin *magazine*

PATRIOTISM (AT ITS BEST) IS PRIDE OF PEOPLE AND place. For me that means pride in our traditions of personal freedom and respect for free speech; in our diverse culture(s), especially our music; and in our wealth of natural beauty. Such a patriotism may or may not be nationalistic. It speaks to true strength of that nation but it does not require or imply loyalty to the bureaucracies or ideology of the state except when these traditions, cultures and natural wonders need defending. Is such a patriotism part of the "historic internationalism of the liberal left"? Not if this fine phrase is a euphemism for the mercifully defunct internationalism of Communism. Is such a patriotism required to celebrate the slaughter of Desert Storm? No.

★

Michael Pertschuk

Co-director, Advocacy Institute

WHO AMONG US DID NOT REACT WITH ENVY TO the luminous voices—Walesa and Havel, Michnik and Mandela, Tutu and others—that seemed to rise out of the midst of oppression to speak eloquently of the core values of a civic society? And people were moved by these

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voices to take action, bear witness, stand tall, risk danger and rise beyond narrow self-interest.

Here, by drab contrast, we saw ourselves as an uninspired people, led by uninspired leaders, mired in self-interest. We saw our citizenry as apathetic except when roused to action to pursue divisive, single-issue passions or greed.

But that sentiment overlooks our persisting tradition of citizen grass-roots movements and leadership. My pride in country stirs whenever I see yet another citizen activist or group of citizen activists rise up in spontaneous, appropriate civic outrage to challenge corporate or governmental wrongdoing. And without PAC money, without P.R. consultants, without massive corporate resources or formal authority, such citizens sometimes prevail.

Our great and small citizen movements have been characterized by the emergence of gifted and effective civic leaders, "sparkplugs" galvanizing and empowering their colleagues and their communities. A look into the heart of any of the dozens of successful citizen campaigns—for civil rights, arms control, public health, environmental protection, consumer justice, the defense of children—reveals such indigenous issue leaders at the core.

De Tocqueville noted this peculiar American trope to activist voluntary association. It remains one of our glories.

★

Katha Pollitt

Poet; essayist; Nation *contributing editor*

IT'S BAD ENOUGH THAT THE LIBERAL LEFT HAS BEEN falling over itself for a decade trying to capture the values of religion and "the family" for our side. Do we have to wave the flag too? In my view, the civic virtues with which liberal American patriotism likes to associate itself—the rule of law, respect for the individual, tolerance and so forth—can be defended on their own terms. Why connect them to a quality whose primary social function, as we saw during the Bush presidential campaign and again during the gulf war, is to encourage feelings of false superiority and to discourage dissent from groupthink?

I realize that internationalism is a bit of a bloodless ideal, but I still think it's the only honorable course for a left that means anything. After all, we don't have any power. We might as well have some principles.

★

Neil Postman

Professor, New York University School of Education

AS I SEE IT, A PATRIOT IS SOMEONE WHO ORGANizes his or her political and social values around a set of national ideals. Patriotism does not imply love of government and certainly does not require that one ignore the gap between a nation's ideals and its practices in actual social life. In fact, one of the important principles of the American Creed is that citizens have an obligation to criticize government and other actors in society when the disparity between ideal and reality becomes too great.

I consider myself a devoted American patriot because the American Creed, which developed out of the epoch of the Enlightenment, is humanistic and liberal and has a universalist dimension. It expresses the essential dignity of human beings and confidence in the value of decisions arrived at by common counsel rather than by violence. It explicitly states enlightened conditions of political association in the First Amendment to the Constitution. These ideals have formed my own consciousness, and I have found no reason to reject them.

It sometimes happens that people who were born and raised in America are so insulted by the imperfections of government and social life that the nation's ideals become invisible to them. When this happens, it is well to remember that Chinese students expressed their impulse to freedom and democracy by making their papier-mâché version of the Statue of Liberty; or that students in Prague in protest over government oppression read aloud from the works of Thomas Jefferson. It also helps to remember the American Creed by talking to immigrants who have come to America, recently and in the past, and who know well why they left their own native land and why they have come here.

★

Ishmael Reed

Novelist; publisher, Konch *magazine*

INTEGRATION, THE ATTEMPT TO MAKE EVERYBODY white and straight, having failed, the United States remains a land of many nations—gender, racial, religious, etc.—with some nations having more power than others. When George Bush, James Baker and Lee Atwater—the Willie Horton Three—designed the most racist national campaign since the election of 1864, they were playing to the irrational fears the white nation has regarding the old threat of enforced miscegenation and genetic annihilation, so successfully used by white nationalists of Germany during the 1930s and 1940s (they too regarded their culture as the one all others should emulate, "the mainstream" and "the universal"). The late Lee Atwater, to his credit, broke ranks with the originators of this ugly and despicable campaign by admitting to its true purpose.

Although the media, which are the main purveyors of "myths" that members of some American nations hold about others, portray black nationalism as the only nationalism in town (Al Sharpton, Minister Farrakhan, Sonny Carson, Public Enemy), white nationalism is much more influential. The media—which have less black, brown and yellow participation than the institutions whose racism they cover—often put a white nationalist spin on things. White reporters and commentators both male and feminist, including those on alternative radio and television, recently aided the white nationalist President by framing affirmative action as a racial issue, when the chief beneficiaries are white women.

White nationalists view blacks—members of the enemy nation—as the ringleaders behind all social and cultural "prob-

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lems." For example, though the diversity movement includes Chicanos, Chicanas, Asian-Americans, African-Americans, women, gays and lesbians, it's always the blacks who come in for heavy criticism in books, articles and Op-Eds written by antidiversity (white nationalist) writers.

Black nationalism is not without its embarrassments, which make it seem petty and provincial (as all nationalisms are)—homophobia, misogyny, anti-Semitism, antimiscegenation, you name it. But at their most thoughtful, Afrocentric authors show that they, being bicultural and capable of discussing Hegel, Freud, Melville and Einstein, as well as Diop, Wright, Wells, Bambara, Cortez and African authors, are more cosmopolitan than the white nationalist intellectuals, who labor under some sort of medieval standard which holds that all of the knowledge of the world is located in the writings of ninety or so mostly dead white male authors (authors many of them haven't read). The duty of the true patriot, a citizen of the world, is to expose nationalism as the village idiot of the Global Village.

★

Larry Rivers

THE LAST CIVIL WAR VETERAN

COLLECTION THE ARTIST

★

John Rosenberg

President, Online Resources, Arlington, Virginia

FOR TOO LONG THE LEFT HAS TOO EASILY REGARDED patriotism as the first refuge of scoundrels. Perhaps the main source of this longstanding discomfort with patriotic sentiment is that patriotism celebrates, at least in theory, the national community as a whole while the left, especially in theory, is oppositional, outside, dissenting. Traditionally class based, with workers viewed as the engine driving society to a better future, the left is now largely a collection of racial, ethnic and gender interests plus some academic defenders of multiculturalism—progressives all, but with no agent of progress and hence no real reason to believe in progress, in sight or in mind.

With little to unite it except opposition to the dominant culture, the left today has lost both the desire and the ability to lay claim to any significant portion of the landscape of American values. Equal opportunity? It has a disparate impact. Free speech? It protects racist and sexist epithets. Self-determination? A principle useful only for bashing the Russians or protecting oil sheiks. This is overstated, to be sure, but not by much. From what precinct of the left today could an authentic voice claim something like "This land is your land, this land is my land . . . "? Patriotism is an expression of solidarity, a principle long favored on the left, but the term itself reveals our predicament. Solidarity of whom? With whom? For what? It is a far but revealing cry from "Solidarity Forever" to "Solidarity in Support of Diversity," a banner displayed during the recent controversy over affirmative action at Georgetown Law School. That's a hard flag to rally around.

★

Edward W. Said

Professor of literature, Columbia University

WHICH COUNTRY? I'VE NEVER FELT THAT I BElonged exclusively to one country, nor have I been able to identify "patriotically" with any other than losing causes. Patriotism is best thought of as an obscure dead language, learned prehistorically but almost forgotten and almost unused since. Nearly everything normally associated with it—wars, rituals of nationalistic loyalty, sentimentalized (or invented) traditions, parades, flags, etc.—is quite dreadful and full of appalling claims of superiority and pre-eminence. But perhaps those are all the results of applied patriotism. Is theoretical patriotism really that much better? Thinking affectionately about home is all I'll go along with.

★

Paul Savoy

Constitutional lawyer

IF THE LIBERAL LEFT HAS LOST THE BATTLE FOR THE symbols of Americana in an age of false patriotism, it is not simply because Republicans have corrupted the art of political discourse. George Bush and Ronald Reagan have

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been so successful in appropriating the symbolism of God, country and flag because progressives have failed to fill the spiritual void by illuminating the original understanding of American patriotism.

Henry Clay described the patriotic spirit as "the sublimest of public virtues." In its original sense, patriotism presupposed that the citizens of a republic, as well as its lawmakers, would be motivated by the desire to enhance the public good more than their own self-interest. Legislators would not be partisans for special interests but what Madison in *The Federalist Papers* called "impartial guardians of a common interest," a representative body of citizens "whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country, and whose patriotism and love of justice will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial considerations."

No political party or national agenda in the history of the United States has more closely approximated the Madisonian ideal of public virtue than the modern progressive vision of mutual caring over self-interest, human needs over military needs, economic equity over trickle-down solutions, public investment over private greed. A broad coalition of feminists, civil rights groups, peace activists, labor organizations, farmers, environmentalists, public health advocates and public-spirited seniors is capable of forming a third party that speaks more directly than either Democrats or Republicans to what disaffected and suffering millions are longing to hear.

If progressives are ever to win in an imperfect world, we must be patriotic enough to try making a better one and dangerous enough to be taken seriously.

★

David Seals

Novelist

IF LOVE OF AMERICA IS A DEFINITION OF PATRIOTISM then I have none. If to be born a citizen of the United States means that I am an "American"—and the peoples of Central and South America are not (merely Costa Ricans and Peruvians and Incas)—then I renounce my citizenship. Far, far from being an American I identify as a Huron Indian living on the land of the ancient caretakers here in what is illegally described as South Dakota, U.S.A.: This land is the Lakota Nation, and land and territory are the immemorial monuments of human pride. My devotion is not to the aborted welfare of the U.S.A., but, as a man of civil conscience, my duty is to overthrow the genocidal American Way of Life in order to try to save the sacred covenant with this land.

Land is patriotism, Goddess Earth.

★

Jerrold Seigel

Professor of history, New York University; author

PATRIOTISM REMINDS US HOW BADLY IDEALS USUALly fare in the real world. The ideal can be there all right. The *patrie* that was *en danger* in the France of the 1790s was endangered not just by foreigners but by those

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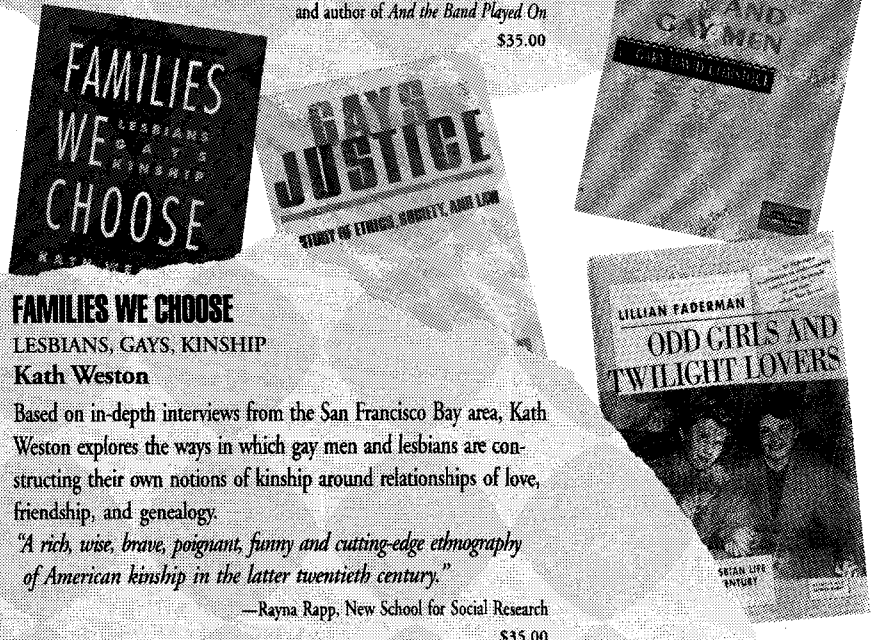

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whose willingness to belong to the nation depended on its preservation of rank and privilege; to be a patriot was to be on the side of democracy and the universal. By drawing people out of their narrow everyday concerns, patriotism of this sort may give them the first leg up on the ladder toward identification with humanity. There are times—our country's fight against fascism during World War II still seems like one to many people of my age—when that model may yet be relevant. The trouble is that patriotism also provides an oh-so-convenient way to confuse the higher ideals it announces with the narrow interests it claims to transcend. The examples are legion. And this is the reason that patriotism is so confusing; people get excited about it partly because it's a cheap virtue and partly because it has a real transformative power, partly because it confuses transcending self-interest with giving in to it and partly because it's one of the few ways many people have to join together with folks who are in some ways different and distant.

The muddle is so deep that it's tempting to throw up our hands and leave patriotism to the yahoos. But nationality remains a fact of political life, even for those who ache to transcend it. Marx famously denied that proletarians had a country, but he also thought it obvious that each proletariat would first have to settle things with its own bourgeoisie. Like Hegel, he understood that human beings arrive at universal concerns only through the mediation of particular interests, sometimes ones with sordid and ugly features. The revolution was supposed to put an end to that contradiction but it hasn't and probably won't. Barring such metaphysical transformations, the real world of politics remains one where many of the people liberals need to address experience patriotism as the first point of contact with whatever resources they have available to invest in a politics of generosity and human concern. How nice if we could alchemically separate out that vein in patriotism from the dross that surrounds it. Because we can't, the Fourth of July is no picnic; but it's not a good time to stay at home either.

★

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William H. Shannon
Monsignor; professor emeritus, Nazareth College

IN RECENT WEEKS WE HAVE EXPERIENCED A GOOD deal of an unprincipled (or perhaps I should say "unthinking") type of patriotism. There are people who, before the gulf war began, seemed to think it unjust and therefore unjustifiable. But once we were in it, their attitude became one of unquestioning support for the war effort. These are the people who felt and still feel that, if you didn't support the war, you were letting our servicemen and -women down. The attitude seems to be: As long as we're in it, let's win it. Questions such as, Is our cause just? Are we observing the kind of restraint that the principle of proportionality requires? seem to have disappeared into the question, How soon can we win?

There may well be people who supported the war for moral reasons, but it is difficult to avoid thinking that what is being called patriotism today is, on the part of many people, a combination of "group narcissism" (which turns us in on ourselves and enables us to see military victory for our side as the highest good of the moment) and a "neurotic obedience" (which leaves decisions in the hands of authority figures and thus relieves us of the anxiety of making our own decisions and accepting the consequences of our own initiatives). This kind of immature patriotism can take on hysterical dimensions. Soon after the end of the war, I saw on the television news pictures of a town where there were villages and yellow ribbons everywhere. One woman interviewed said she was almost afraid not to follow suit, even though she was opposed to the war. Her fear was that if she did not conform her home would be vandalized.

Does this mean, then, that patriotism is a quality of questionable morality? Is patriotism an evil? At this point I would like to bring in an old friend who tends to be forgotten today: St. Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas lists patriotism under the virtues. And he sees it as a potential part of the virtue of justice. In fact, the name he uses for it may sound strange to us. He uses the name "piety." Piety for him is the virtue that moves us to offer honor and respect to those to whom we are indebted. He says we are indebted first of all to God; hence we owe piety to God. We are indebted to our parents; hence we owe piety to them. We are also indebted to our homeland; hence we owe piety to our homeland and to our fellow citizens. The piety we owe to homeland and all its people is what Aquinas means by patriotism.

I want to stress the point that he considers patriotism as a potential part of the virtue of justice. This surely means that patriotism must look to justice as its primary mentor. This means that anything that is against justice is surely against the virtue of patriotism. Hence to support and defend our country on any occasion where we are convinced its actions may be unjust is not patriotism at all. As a part of justice, patriotism demands that we make moral judgments on the course of actions that our country may take. A patriotism that refuses ever to call one's country to account for the morality of its action is no true patriotism at all. It is a bogus patriotism.

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I say all this because I think that patriotism has become a bad word for people who, because they see it so widely abused to cover actions that are not patriotic at all, want to banish the word entirely from their own vocabulary. Like the man on the way from Jerusalem to Jericho, the word "patriotism" has fallen among robbers who have stripped it of its true meaning. I want to be like the Good Samaritan and rescue it from the damages it has suffered and restore it to its own good, healthy meaning.

★

Wallace Shawn

Playwright; author; actor

"PATRIOTISM" CAN SEEM TO BE AS HARMLESS AS the love of certain songs, food, a landscape. Certain personalities from one's own country can seem so charming, so delightful. But "patriotism" always means: If you feel a fondness for your country, then it ought to be worth it to you to do *x*—to kill, to destroy.

Patriotism is considered to be an emotion a person ought to feel. But why? Why is it nobler to love your own country than to love someone else's? Why is it particularly wonderful to think that the place you're from is the greatest in the world? Why should individuals speak in the first person plural about "our ideals" and "the things we believe"?

If certain great figures from our country's past have had valuable insights, by all means let's be inspired by them. But let's not make a fetish out of it. The United States is a monster that must be stopped, controlled. It's too elaborate to say, We must change our current behavior because it violates our noble traditions. The historical point is probably untrue, and it doesn't matter.

For citizens of small, weak countries, patriotism might be part of a yearning for justice. For people who are despised, who despise themselves, more self-esteem might be a good thing. But for people who already are in love with themselves, who worship themselves, who deeply believe they're superior to others, more self-esteem is not needed. What we need instead is to know ourselves.

★

Stanley K. Sheinbaum

Publisher, New Perspectives Quarterly*; economist*

I WAS BUT A LAD WHEN THE KIDS ON THE NEXT BLOCK, 124th Street, and those on 123rd, mine, waged war with each other, complete with hostile invasions and even injuries. "Us kids" on 123rd Street were always the good ones, of course, always described to our mamas and papas as the defenders, never the aggressors like "them." I remember asking myself, What the hell is all this about? What's better about 123rd Street? While I knew little about architecture at the time, I was never impressed that the buildings on either block outdid those on the other. Nor did I know much more about girls at the time, but even my untutored eye could not discern any

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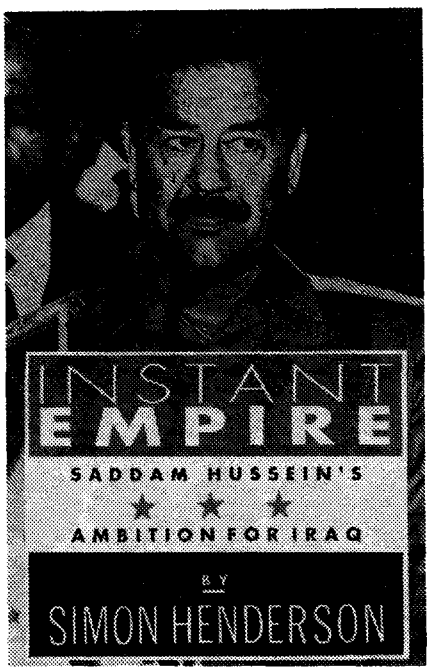

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difference between the good looks on my block and theirs. So what was I expected to be loyal to on 123rd Street? No rational reason ever presented itself; there was even the suspicion that a kind of animal instinct was at work.

As I have aged—which I have done a lot—I figure that the purpose, when there is no particular principle involved, comes down to the self-interest of those few who happen to take charge of one of these "nations" or another. I can certainly accept loyalty as being relevant to family and even to friends, but not to mere acquaintances on 123rd Street or to abstract bodies of land.

In the final analysis, patriotism and loyalty ring beautifully, but how can thinking people—those who have broken free from the animal level—devote themselves to patriotism when it is merely a trapping devoid of principled content? We have known for centuries that propagandistic rhetoric and the waving of the flag alongside militaristic adventurism evoke "proud" emotional stirrings, and we convince ourselves that we are functioning on some higher plane. However, how high can that plane be when even Hollywood achieves the same result with mood music, color and even mirrors to evoke those very same emotions when merely sitting between the four walls of some sterile odeon? We are too easily moved to tears and to the throbs of amorous passion just as we are to those allegedly stratospheric values of God and country. Why not call it manipulation? (No wonder we witness a symbiosis between Washington and Hollywood.)

The real trick lies in promoting the principles associated with humanitarianism—that is, concerning ourselves with the well-being of all peoples. Too often those principles are set aside with the invocation of flag and national security. When President Bush was selling us on the gulf war the appeal was made to patriotism. Then, when he began to talk about a "new world order," about which the entire country, even the world, was eager and hungry to know more, he could have become a true leader and taught us that perhaps indeed there could be substantive humanitarian content to these concepts of patriotism and loyalty, instead of never mentioning them at all. The 123rd Street kids are no different

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from "those" on 124th, as indeed the Kurds are no different from the Latvians, the other Balts or the 100,000 Iraqis we killed. And somewhere in that thought lies the potential for making the new world order a reality.

★

Robert Sherrill

Reporter; corporations correspondent, The Nation

JIMMY DURANTE HAD THE BEST CONCEPT OF PATRIotism: "If my country needs me, I'll answer the call, but they'd better not call me collect."

★

Daniel Singer

Author; Europe correspondent, The Nation

BORN IN ONE COUNTRY, BROUGHT UP IN ANOTHER, living and working in a third, I am what used to be known as a "rootless and passportless cosmopolitan," except that I have a British passport. Since I am also, unfashionably, a great admirer of Rosa Luxemburg, anything that is nationalist should be alien to me and I should be the last person to preach on the subject.

If I nevertheless had to proclaim a patriotic objective, I would define it as follows: to turn one's country into such a society of freedom, equality and social justice that it would influence others by its example. The inevitable transcending of frontiers would thus not be the result of a "world order" imposed from above and abroad but a gradual construction by the associate producers first on the national and then on the international scale. Two points must be mentioned. The nation-state may be historically doomed, yet it still provides the first stage for the radical transformation of society. Second, the universal, toward which we tend and which corresponds to the economic and ecological needs of our planet, should in no way clash with differences in language, culture and civilization. Instead of suppressing them, it must thrive on differences. But for the time being, as patriotism stands for the negation of the other, for oppression and for military parades, I can only repeat Rimbaud's words: "Ma patrie se lève, j'aime mieux la voir assise" or, roughly, "My country stands tall, I prefer it seated."

★

Patricia Smith

Poet; arts critic, The Boston Globe

THIS WAS INSPIRED BY A VISIT TO TOMPKINS SQUARE Park the day before it was closed by the City of New York. The national anthem was playing through someone's radio, perhaps before a baseball game, and one homeless man was standing, saluting.

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like a cough through America's mouth
and the twilight's last gleaming is just that,
a sickly flash above our heads
as we ride unsuspecting in the bellies
of sleek trains, plop to our knees in churches,
embracing truths that disgust us,
as we tumble beneath tangled sheets
measuring and savoring the skin of our lovers,
what so proudly we wail the anthems of radio
electric rhythms siphoned from black boys
on the streets of Roxbury, what so proudly we
wail those instant grade-school stanzas praising
wheatfields we have never seen, what so proudly we wail
each precise and stagnant chant we have been taught,
pledging allegiance with raised eyes
and hands slapped over our blubbering hearts, what so
proudly we fail to pull together our frantic verses
of "no, no, dammit, no more," what so proudly
we fail to hear it, the song we really need to sing,
great gulping syllables off target, off key,
how wonderfully its tinny melody is pulled
through the air, and the man who wears his
body on his back feels his switch flipped and
it seems he is standing forever, up, up.

★

Ted Solotaroff

Editor; essayist; critic

MY MOST POWERFUL PATRIOTIC EXPERIENCE GOES back about twenty-five years. It was at the famous anti-Vietnam War demonstration at the Pentagon. The students and the rest of us were sitting there on the pavement and the soldiers and their officers were standing before us, mostly one generation from two Americas. The soldiers were nervous and sullen; their own solidarity seemed to be in their weapons. The students were relaxed and cheerful; their only weapon in the looming confrontation was the solidarity of their idealism. At one point they began singing "America the Beautiful," and as I joined in I thought of Paul Goodman's recent words, "We only want our country back again."

I knew what he meant and I could see there, right before me, the difference between the American patriotism I had grown up with during the Roosevelt era and the nationalism that had taken over after World War II. The patriotism rooted in social and political idealism continued to flicker during the antiwar movement of King, McCarthy and Bobby Kennedy and came to another climax the night McGovern was nominated. Since then no viable leader has emerged from that other America that I still love, increasingly in the abstract, while the nationalist leaders continue to find wars and weapons to mobilize their America. I still think the other America is

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Initial Signators (individuals' organizations listed for identification purposes only): **Bay Area Religious Peace Action**; **Hands Off!**; **Long Island Catholic Peace Fellowship–Kathy Boylan** (Gulf Peace Team), **Bill Brisotti, Joe Hamilton, Patti and Vic Scutari**; **RAW–Roots Against War** (Bay Area); **Refuse and Resist**; **Students Against War** (NYC); **United Bay Area Veterans Against War**; **Vietnam Veterans Against the War/Anti-Imperialist**; **War Parade 18**–Protestors arrested with multiple felony and misdemeanor charges at the Parade of Shame, NYC June 10th; **Daniel Berrigan**, S.J.; **Francis A. Boyle**, Prof. of Int'l Law, Univ. of Illinois; **Rev. Robert Castle** (Episcopal priest who led sit-in at Cathedral of St. John the Divine to protest service for Schwarzkopf, Powell & Cheney); **Dave Clennon**; **Carl Dix**, nat'l spokesperson, Revolutionary Communist Party (served 2 yrs. in Leavenworth for refusing to go to Vietnam); **Shawn Eichman and Joe Urgo**, convicted of felony for protest at Times Sq. Recruiting Station (NYC); **Phil Farnham**, RCP-NYC, War Parade 18 (denounced Schwarzkopf as murderer in St. John's Cathedral); **Gavriella Gemma**, Nat'l Coalition to Stop U.S. Intervention in the Middle East; **Jim Haughton**, Fightback (Harlem); **Lydia Howell**, Poet/Activist; **Peter Jamieson**, Vietnam Vet, War Resisters League; **Joey Johnson**, Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade; **Rev. Michael Kendall**, Cathedral of St. John the Divine; **Flo Kennedy, Ron Kuby, William Kunstler, Hillary Richard, Eric Seitz, and Len Weinglass**–Attorneys; **Alhaaj Ghazi Khankan**, Pres., Nat'l Council of Islam; **C. Clark Kissinger** (organized first antiwar march on Washington, 1965); **Yuri Kochiyama**, community activist; **Beth Lamont**; **Corliss Lamont**; **Professor Louie** (Brooklyn); **Fr. Lawrence Lucas**, Church of the Resurrection (Harlem); **Dr. Mohammed T. Mehdi**, Pres., Arab-American Relations Committee; **Monika Mitchell**, Member, Colony Theatre (NYC); **Maryam Namazie and Sean Hellier**, War Parade 18; **Jeff Paterson, Ronald Jean-Baptiste, and Sam Lwin**–G.I. Resisters; **Andrea C. Poe**; **Fr. Salvador Ros**, St. Mary and St. Margaret (South Bronx); **Rev. Lucius Walker, Jr.**, Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO); **Neva E. Wartell**, Nat'l Office, Stop the U.S. War Machine Action Network; **Rev. George W. Webber**, Prof. and Ex-Pres., NY Theological Seminary; **Paul Wright**, #3930783, *Prisoners Legal News*; **Behzad Yaghamaian**, Asst. Prof. of Economics, Stockton College.

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there, waiting for a leader to restate and empower its ideals (Mario Cuomo did it for about an hour in 1984), but after the big brutal assertion in Iraq of America as Number One the night seems even darker and we are even farther from home.

★

Benjamin Spock

Pediatrician; author; peace activist

PATRIOTISM BY MY DEFINITION IS PURPOSELY BROAD enough to cover my political opponents as well as myself. It means love of country or region in the sense of wanting to work for its improvement, as well as defend it against the attack of a foreign power that seeks to capture it or a domestic group that seeks to destroy its Constitution by illegal means.

Relations between nations should be governed by their promises to the United Nations; this is a world patriotism that should have a higher priority than loyalty to one's own nation. I view as dangerously ignorant those who want to deny the label of patriot to political opponents who are operating within the Constitution, or to pacifists.

★

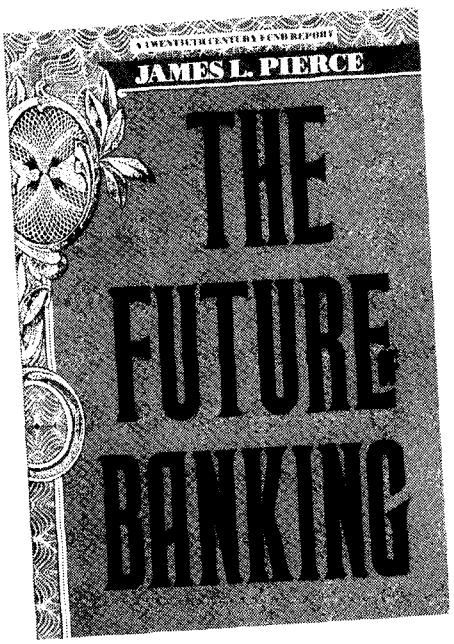
Haunani-Kay Trask

Hawaiian independence activist

IN MY LANGUAGE, PATRIOTISM IS TRANSLATED AS *aloha āina*—love of the land. To our people, the land is our mother, Papa-hānau-moku, "she who births islands." Thus our birthplace, Hawai'i, is the child of Papa and the elder sibling of the Hawaiian people. In Hawaiian culture, as in all of Polynesia, younger siblings must serve elder siblings who will nourish and protect us in return. As we care for our lands and waters, they will care for us. The relationship is not only reciprocal, it is familial. This is the principal tradition of my people and my country: *aloha āina*, love of the land; *aloha āina*, Hawaiian patriotism.

In 1893 this tradition was forcibly interrupted by American marines who invaded my country, overthrew our chiefly ruler and supported an all-white pro-American government in place of our Native Queen. My people had no voice in this government, and no part in the annexation of our islands to the United States of America in 1898.

Today, a different kind of patriotism exists in my homeland. This patriotism came with the foreigners, the Americans. It is a patriotism of stolen Hawaiian lands and denied Native nationhood, of forced American citizenship and banished Hawaiian language. It is a patriotism that takes and destroys our lands and our culture and our people and leaves in their



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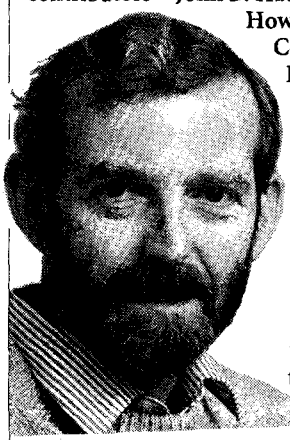

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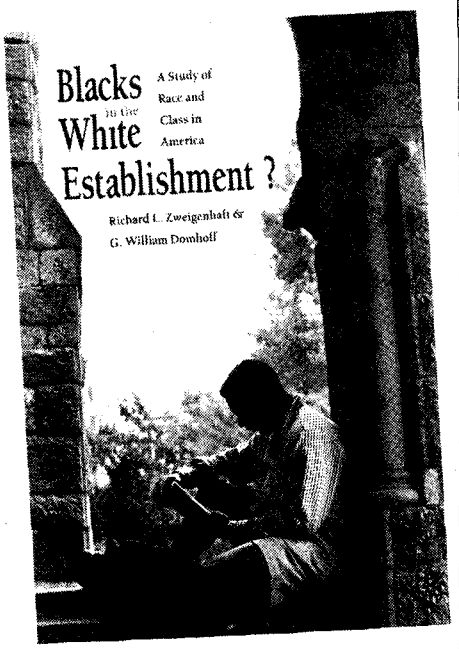

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place American military bases with nuclear submarines, killer jets and arrogant young men. It is a patriotism of war.

But we who were born from our mother, Hawai'i, still honor her and still work to protect and to nourish her. We speak our own patriot's language to America: *aloha āina*, love of the land; *aloha āina*, Hawaiian patriotism.

★

Calvin Trillin

Journalist; novelist; poet

A NATIVE AMERICAN VIEW
OF COLUMBUS'S VOYAGE

Columbus sailed the ocean blue
In fourteen hundred and ninety-two.
So, nu?

★

Katrina vanden Heuvel

Editor at large, The Nation

FORTY-SEVEN YEARS AGO, AS ANOTHER WAR DREW to a close, President Franklin Roosevelt called for an Economic Bill of Rights. It included "the right to a useful and remunerative job in the industries or shops or farms or mines of the nation; the right to earn enough to provide adequate food and clothing and recreation . . . the right of every family to a decent home; the right to adequate medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health; the right to adequate protection from the economic fears of old age, sickness, accident and unemployment; the right to a good education." Try to imagine President Bush calling for such a bill.

Patriotism means that no citizen is denied these basic rights. For unless there is security here at home there cannot be lasting peace in the world.

★

Harriet Van Horne

Television critic, Los Angeles Times *syndicate*

THE CORROSION OF PATRIOTISM IN OUR TIME IS A saga of lost innocence. One of the dogmas of our great past was the assumption that *every* citizen was a patriot. In a kinder, gentler age, nobody felt obliged to proclaim himself a bigger, braver patriot than the next person.

In the 1980s, a time when wealth accumulated and men decayed, the superpatriots entered Gloryland. They were the anointed Moral Majority. They stood foursquare for God, Ronald Reagan and the bombing of abortion clinics.

The President one critic has described as "morally impaired" gave the kiss of life to the jingoists. Old-style patriots who liked to quote the Founding Fathers and the Bill of Rights were verbally stoned and put outside the pale. We could only wince when the President called the *contras* "freedom fighters," when Oliver North became a national hero, when the pledge

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of allegiance became—with sinister embellishments—a campaign issue.

In the Reagan-Bush era we old-style patriots have done a lot of wincing. We winced when Grenada was invaded to "protect" American medical students who were never in danger. We winced when Jeane Kirkpatrick told us that in the dark days before Reagan "nobody was representing the United States." We winced—and some of us wept in shame—when George Bush, wearing the white flower of a blameless life, won the 1988 election with tactics only a Mafia don could admire.

Being eighteenth-century-style patriots—rational, tolerant, liberal—has stigmatized us in the eyes of the jingo-patriots. We have not shown much wisdom in conveying the meaning of our quiet but deeply felt patriotism. How shall we persuade the flag-wavers that patriotism is not an enforceable sentiment? How can we tell them that patriotism is wanting the best for a country that has never lived up to its potential?

In this vast and diverse country there will probably never be a consensus on patriotism. There is too deep a chasm between the haves and the have-nots, between the educated and the ignorant. Patriotism flourishes best in a community with common ideals, a common frame of reference. Thanks to years of unrestricted immigration, it will take years to assimilate the millions who brought little to these shores beyond their strong backs and desperate hungers.

It seems that only an outbreak of war generates a surge of patriotism, a feeling of unity. And if the war happens to be one of President Bush's swaggering, ego-enhancing skirmishes, even that consensus proves fragile, as the gulf war has clearly shown.

Maybe George Bernard Shaw was right when he wrote in 1915, "You'll never have a quiet world till you knock the patriotism out of the human race." The thought is too radical for most of us, but there's a kernel of wisdom there.

★

Gore Vidal

Novelist; essayist; playwright

WHAT IS PATRIOTISM NOW, AND HOW DO WE GET rid of it, and what do we put in its place, if anything? The word is politically incorrect, of course. Patria-pater-father. So where is Mom? Didn't she help Dad turn the American wilderness into a cement desert bright with golden arches? Didn't she help Dad kill those pesky redskins? Anyway, whose patria are we talking about? The so-called Indians are the original Americans whose homeland European invaders stole. My own family settled on Cherokee land in South Carolina and on Chickasaw land in Mississippi. In due course, the remnants of dozens of tribes were finally dumped in what is now Oklahoma, a place none of us wanted any part of until the oil started to gush at the Osage reservation, and my Mississippi-born grandfather made a state out of the last worst hope of the Choctaws, Sioux, Seminoles, et al.

Certainly, it is very hard for most Americans to be patriotic when there is no agreed-upon country to cherish, only warring tribes and, over all, a National Security State to keep the lid on—$300 billion a year for law and order. There is one nation for a black, one for a boat-person, a third for a Cherokee, and milk and honey for that one-fifth of the population with money. What we are now witnessing is not so much the disintegration of the United States (less dramatic than that of the Soviet Union but no less inexorable) as the brand-new realization that we are never going to integrate in order to form a more perfect nation-state of the sort that Bismarck and Lincoln dreamed of. There is a flight from the center everywhere. Simultaneously, there is a centripetal movement toward the creation of a single world state in order to preserve, protect and defend the human race—from itself. The world state will be a tyrannous one unless the tribes assert themselves within the framework of what will be not a nation-state but, ideally, an organization to monitor the weather, the food supply, the (*Ora Pro Nobis, Pater Sancte*) population.

Signs and Portents

On July 4, the Descendants of Robert Kay will hold an annual reunion in South Carolina. Who was Robert Kay? A descendant himself of English farmers who came to Virginia in the seventeenth century, he bought land (1791) in what is now Anderson County, South Carolina. He has many descendants and I am one of them. So is my seventh cousin, Jimmy Carter (all right, all right, it could have been Gerald Ford). I won't be there this year but last year I attended the Gore family reunion in Mississippi. At the last moment cousin Albert (Al) Gore Jr. and his button-cute wife, Tipper, sent word that a fundraiser took precedence over kin. I found this candor endearing. The cousinage did not.

I knew no one at the gathering but I was at home. Who would not be when confronted with 200 variations of one's own nose and elephantine ears? These clan reunions that are taking place all over the country are not a WASP phenomenon. Blacks have been searching out their roots for some time while the original "Americans" have never ceased to honor their tribal ghosts, just about all that we have left them. Hispanics now live in blithe unassimilated enclaves in what Mexicans still refer to as the Occupied Lands, seized by us from Mexico in 1848. Meanwhile, American Jews gaze raptly upon their recently exhumed "homeland," half a world away from North America, and though most of them sensibly refuse to go there to live, they allow the rest of us to finance (officially at a cost thus far of over $50 billion) this land that other Jews have occupied. Is it any wonder that, in the absence of an agreed-upon nation, our many tribes are unfurling their standards and casting ever wider the webs of kinship for mutual support and defense against the state that no one loves? If the Vice President and Secretary of Defense chose not to fight for their country in Vietnam, why should *anyone* fight for their country? Suddenly, all our turkeys are coming home to roost; and the skies are dark with their unlovely wings while the noise of their gobbling makes hideous Sunday television.

As there was, famously, no there there in Gertrude Stein's Oakland, so there is no here here, and to try to do something about it is to misread the times that we live in. We can do nothing at all. Jefferson foresaw the eventual degradation of our system and he suggested that we hold a constitutional con-

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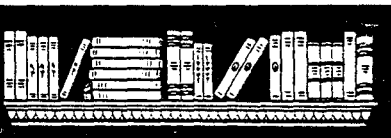

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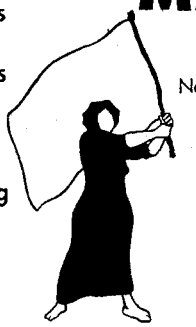

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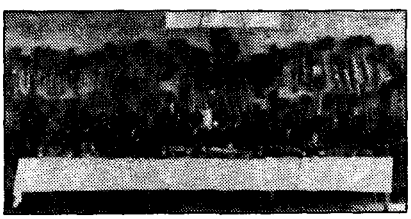

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vention once a generation. But neither our rulers nor their hapless critics will allow such a thing. ("You see, *they* will take away the Bill of Rights"; plainly, it is more seemly to allow the Supreme Court to take it away.)

So, center-less, we now begin to fall apart. Meanwhile, the clans are gathering. If the state be bad, then each tribe must protect itself, and we shall exchange the world of Jefferson for that of Hobbes. In due course, the *idea* of the nation-state may become as obsolete as the nation-state, in fact, already is. Russia is more mirror of us—or we of it—than either cares to admit. In any case, it will be the collapse of the world's already skewed economy that will make for great change, not the firing of a patriot's gun at some National Security Fort.

From the one, many. That could be our happy fate in a single, interdependent world, with no flags to burn, no guns to be shot in anger, no—*dare* I propose so dangerous a proposition?—taxation without representation? In short, a new world *dis*order. Freedom, justice for all. CNN, too. *In hoc signo* . . .

★

Michele Wallace

Author; critic, The Village Voice

I HAVE ALWAYS HAD PROFOUND problems with the concept of patriotism, in the United States or anywhere else. After all, it has only one purpose: to make war. And I don't believe that killing people is ever a solution, any more than I believe that the death penalty will prevent murders. I like to think of myself as a future citizen of a world in which we will finally accept our share of the responsibility for reversing the global damage we've already done.

I don't think patriotism has anything to do with loving one's country or the people in it. It's the cover word for keeping the war machine tuned. Of course, the war machine doesn't run on patriotic feeling alone. It runs on the mountain share of our federal budget that is devoted to the military. It runs on the will of the greedy corporations that sometimes need "bombs bursting in air," as well as their usual economic bullying to insure that their profits continue to grow. And

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it also runs on—although this is less talked about—an omnipresent, macho, xenophobic, misogynistic, know-nothing mindset among the majority of our voting-age population. Despite Watergate, Contragate, the S&L and bank bailouts, misled Kurdish refugees, global warming and oil spills in Alaska, many of us still buy into "our country right or wrong." We are helped along in this more than we often realize by the bumbling machinations of our advertising, TV, tabloids and Hollywood films. As a black woman and as a cultural critic who doesn't have a large investment in the status quo, I can afford to see quite clearly that many aspects of our national culture, which would appear superficially to have nothing to do with war, help to feed an aggressive, killer-take-all perspective on global affairs, hence the Persian Gulf debacle.

★

James Weinstein

Editor, In These Times

WHY WOULD *THE NATION* BOTHER TO DO A SPECIAL issue on patriotism? Dumb leftists will denounce the idea as a sham—the last refuge of scoundrels and all that. Smart leftists will opine that we are the only real patriots, since we represent the true best hope for the nation. It's all so predictable.

In fact, most Americans are patriots. We all love our country, even if for different reasons. This is, after all, the land of opportunity. You can get rich, either through hard work, luck or at other people's expense. It is the land of democracy, the country that promises equality before the law and in the political process. And it is the land of liberty, where you can say what you want, write what you please, go where you desire. There aren't many other countries where all these things are true, or even part of the official ideology.

So why has patriotism become an issue? In part because of the cold war, during which the advocacy of socialism, or ideas historically considered socialist, came to be associated with a particular nation-state defined as our enemy. In that sense the cold war began in 1917, when Woodrow Wilson defined Russia as a mortal threat to our way of life.

But also because the left has too often confused the government, or the administration in office, with the nation, and in the process has identified more strongly with other nations—whether the Soviet Union, Vietnam or Nicaragua—than with our own. The flag burners and those who in the 1960s thought that change in this country was going to be brought about by a revolutionary Third World encircling the United States are good examples of this. These people not only hate our government, which is entirely rational, but also have contempt for Americans in general. To them politics is reduced to moral posturing and exemplary acts that may make them feel cleansed, but that feed into their own isolation as actors in the political process.

The irony is that every successful revolution has been made by movements that have successfully represented themselves as acting in the best interests of their country—or as the true patriots. For the left to have a chance of success in America, it, too, must learn first to see itself this way, and then to convince the majority of people that its vision is accurate.

★

David Weir

Senior editor, California *magazine*

THE PATRIOTIC TRADITIONS I VALUE ARE FOUND IN the cracks of the system, among the whistleblowers inside government agencies; the people working for corporations who sometimes come up after I give an anticorporate speech, hand me their card, smile and say "call me"; or the idealistic students who *still* show up in graduate journalism school, believing that muckraking will make a difference.

I like the fact that Americans feel at least some moral responsibility toward other countries, as revealed in the response to "circle of poison"-type stories. People here think it is wrong to ban something at home, then ship it overseas. It seems un-American. That is a seam in the nationalistic system where I can operate comfortably, and it works to open more people to thinking in global terms.

There are other things I value, and that I miss when I'm overseas. Though it is easy to feel alienated here, and to read too much into others' seemingly blind patriotism, there is a kind of tolerance on an individual level that has not yet been wiped out. Before a recent baseball game, when the announcer asked the crowd to stand for the national anthem, I didn't, preferring to munch my popcorn instead, and as near as I can tell, in the eyes of my fellow fans I was perfectly welcome to take or leave the anthem, remove my cap or keep it on, stand up or stay seated. Nobody much gave a damn (or a lecture), and I like that about Americans.

Also, the other day my 15-year-old daughter came in wearing her grandfather's 1940 West Point sweater—it's still in mint condition. One of my colleagues noticed it, then noted her large, silver peace-symbol earrings. "That apple fell far from the tree," she remarked. I like that about America, too.

★

Naomi Weisstein

Professor of psychology, SUNY, Buffalo

IT'S PARTICULARLY HARD, THESE DAYS, TO BE AT THE same time a feminist, a leftist and a patriot. We are approaching the end of this horrific century with a further descent into endless war. America is treating this nightmare as if it were a bar mitzvah—"today I am a man." Masculinist values, roaring from a wide range of thinkers, from neocon Camille Paglia to Stormin' Norman, are central to this complex. Pilots on aircraft carriers were shown porn movies before they took off on their bombing missions over Iraq. (Perhaps life imitated the art of *Top Gun*, in which one pilot speaks of the enemy to another: "They must be near; I've got a hard-on.") Automobile commercials glorify the competitive spirit of *Deer Hunter* country and its football players, and make the connection between patriotism and masculine joy.

We can no longer ignore the connections between macho

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What is patriotism? The term is ritually invoked to rally people behind this or that policy, or to damn those who oppose the policy—most recently during the gulf war. In an increasingly interdependent world is patriotism obsolete? Can people on the left *be* patriotic? In this special 125th anniversary issue some ninety contributors give their answers, in prose, poetry and art. Copies of this historic issue are available for $4 each; $2.50 each for orders of 10–50 copies; please call for special prices on larger orders.

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and murder, between a triumphal jingoism and the victimization of the weak, between the adoration of male power and the sanctification of world leaders who would rather kill hundreds of thousands than risk the unmanly ignominy of backing down. There is much to admire in American culture; indeed, there is much that the world admires in it, and one can imagine a benign particularism that expresses a common cultural identity and a sense of connection. But today's patriotism seems to me the patriarchal justification for legally sanctioned murder, and, as a feminist, I cannot envision a left-wing patriotism that overcomes this.

★

Tom Wicker

Columnist, The New York Times*; author*

PATRIOTISM IS WORN IN THE HEART AND NOT ON THE SLEEVE.

★

Garry Wills

Author; journalist; professor, Northwestern University

LOVE OF ONE'S COUNTRY SHOULD BE LIKE LOVE OF one's spouse—a give-and-take criticism and affection. Although it is to be hoped one prefers one's spouse to other people, we rarely see anyone using his or her spouse as the excuse to blackguard or defame all other men or women. Loyalty to the one does not entail a denigration of all others.

What masquerades as love of country is often a cover for mere hatred and fear of other people and alien governments. One does not prove that one loves one's wife by battering other women—yet we are asked to think it a failure in patriotism if we show any lack of enthusiasm for adding the sixty-thousandth casualty to Iraqi troops or to the civilian dead. This is not love but perversion, and an insult to the nation in whose name such hatred is indulged.

★

Sheldon S. Wolin

Author; editor

NATIONALISM APPEARS AS THE UNCRITICAL, AND hence manipulable, identification with power. Its ideal end is national unity or the subordination of contested social differences. The gulf war reconfirms the menace of an idolatry so astonishing that it allows a nation to be mobilized for no politically coherent purpose. It is powerful because it is unthinking. Who ever deliberates about being nationalistic? It appeals to a divided society because it promises inclusion—at a price. One puts aside historical grievances as well as contemporary wrongs. The divisiveness inherent in capitalism makes nationalism a necessity.

Patriotism is commonly thought of as love of one's country and loyal obedience to its government. Conservatives and

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mainstream liberals have no trouble with patriotism. Their interests/values coincide with those of "their" country because they have the power to define simultaneously the public interest and the rhetoric of patriotism. Since they know that they are likely to remain in power indefinitely, loyalty presents no problem. Theirs is a patriotism of winners.

Patriotism might be understood somewhat differently as a reasoned but critical allegiance to certain shared values that define the kind of collective identity to which we would want to think of ourselves as loyal. That identity would not cancel other loyalties but compete with them and they with it. The question provoked by that definition is not Is that patriotism? but Is that kind of patriotism possible any longer?

The left has trouble with patriotism not because it is the party of humanity but because it is, nationally and internationally, the party of losers. It is linked with the Democratic Party at home, with socialism in Europe and with communism of the past. But it is also the party of losers because it is afflicted with a fashionable skepticism that sees the elements of patriotism—loyalty, sharing, commitment to a particular society—as threats to what many leftists have come to prize most, their special difference, so much so that each difference—black, Asian, Latino, feminist, gay, lesbian, etc.—needs its own special "discourse" to (ex)communicate. Civic responsibility is swallowed by parochial loyalty to a particularistic community constructed by a discourse that protests exclusion while practicing it. The awful truth is that what is loosely called "the left" today may be incapable of any comprehensive identity. And that may be a good thing—to a degree.

Is there an ideal of collectivity that cherishes differences and commonality, that takes pride in some of our history while accepting the dark chapters? I would propose democracy: It is far less exclusionary, in principle and practice, than nationalism, patriotism or the ideology of capitalism. And because everyone is "in," each is historically responsible for what the collectivity may do to others in our name. Democracy owes a historic debt to America for the freedom that has enabled democracy to survive, even if mainly as an endangered species. Democracy can be patriotic, but only on condition that the first loyalty is to it.

★

William Worthy and Deirdre Kapes Hiebert

Journalist; visiting professor, Howard University
Research colleague

EVEN ON THE LIBERAL LEFT, IN AND OUT OF CONgress, the prospects are dismal for politically significant opposition to future patriotic aggression abroad, whether of the high-visibility gulf war model, or in the low-intensity-conflict category. In this connection, A. Philip Randolph once pointed out that in no European metropolis did any of the labor, socialist or communist parties ever take a *principled* position against their own nations' imperialist wars.

On the lecture circuit, it is clear that what Randall Robinson of TransAfrica calls Americans' "withering ignorance"

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cuts across all age groups and all levels of education. Dumb shock, even disbelief, is the common reaction when one cites the *Congressional Record* of June 23, 1969, listing 159 military interventions by virtually all U.S. Presidents, from 1798 to 1942, in every corner of the globe. Even greater dismay greets a reference to the 215 kindred interventions from 1946 to 1975 (the figure is now up to about 300), which are listed in the Brookings Institution's book *Force without War.*

To expect enlightenment from the education system (a high percentage of public school principals and superintendents twice voted for Reagan) or from a press that turns patriotically prostitute during every invasion of a Grenada or a Panama or an Iraq is to expect the imperial leopard to change its spots.

None of this is new, nor is it peculiar to American neocolonialism. Bertrand Russell recalled that between grade school and university, he was taught three different configurations of foreign enemies and friends to hate and love. Today, with television, mass manipulation is possible overnight.

Requisite "vaccinations" against Bush's patriotic replay of gunboat diplomacy are readily at hand for those with the will to clear vision: in *The Nation*'s publication of a 1920 N.A.A.C.P. report on the U.S. Marine Corps occupation of Haiti (which even today is imperially victimized); in *Dollar Diplomacy*, a still-relevant 1925 study of U.S. imperialism in the Caribbean by Scott Nearing and Joseph Freeman; in the remarkable 1971 Arno Press/New York Times book *The Black Press Views American Imperialism (1898-1900)*, about small-town Southern editors urging open resistance to U.S. involvement in Cuba, the Philippines and the Boxer Rebellion; in Ramsey Clark's call on January 19 in Washington's Lafayette Park for the dismantling of the U.S. military machine, without which more North-South wars would be impossible; and in the fiery 1852 Fourth of July speech by Frederick Douglass:

> What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? . . . To him, your celebration is a sham; . . . your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciation of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; . . . a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of the United States, at this very hour.

It was Lord Russell who during the Vietnam War put us on high alert that fascism will come to America because, he said, America has brought fascism to so many other countries. There might be a bit of hope of sidetracking that force of destiny if today we had a replica of those aging abolitionists who, at the turn of the century, came out of retirement to place "manifest destiny" in the framework of the slavery they had fought so passionately to abolish. Today, in moral terms, they would be warning, as Eduard Benes did about dictatorships, that every imperialist nation "looks strong until the last five minutes." Perhaps in a recent speech, U.N. Development Program administrator William Draper 3d glimpsed the approach of *our* crumbling five-minute span when he proclaimed, "The developing world [so much of which is now under U.S. neocolonial control] is becoming a powder keg ready to explode."

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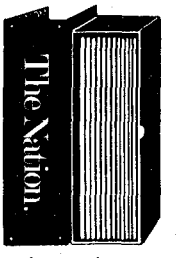

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Yevgeny Yevtushenko

Soviet poet

THE LOSS

Russia has lost Russia in Russia.
Russia searches for itself
like a cut finger in snow,
a needle in a hayloft,
like an old blind woman madly stretching her hand in fog,
searching with hopeless incantation for her lost milk cow.

We buried our icons.
We didn't believe in our own great books.
We fight only with alien grievances.

Is it true that we didn't survive under our own yoke,
becoming for ourselves worse than foreign enemies?
Is it true that we are doomed to live only in the silk
nightgown of idealism, eaten by moths?—
Or in numbered prison robes?

Is it true that epilepsy is our national character?
Or convulsions of pride?
Or convulsions of self-humiliation?
Ancient rebellions against new copper kopecks,
Against such foreign fruits as potatoes—
now only a harmless dream.

Today's rebellion swamps the entire Kremlin
like a mortal tide—
Is it true that we Russians have only one unhappy choice?
The ghost of Tsar Ivan the Terrible?
Or the Ghost of Tsar Chaos?
So many impostors. Such "imposterity."

Everyone is a leader, but no one leads.
We are confused as to which banners and slogans to carry.
And such a fog in our heads
that everyone is wrong
and everyone is guilty in everything.

We already walked enough in such fog,
in blood up to our knees.
Lord, it's enough to punish us.
Forgive us, pity us.

Is it true that we no longer exist?
Or are we not yet born?
We are birthing now,
But it's so painful to be born again.

March 1991

Translated by James Reagan and the author

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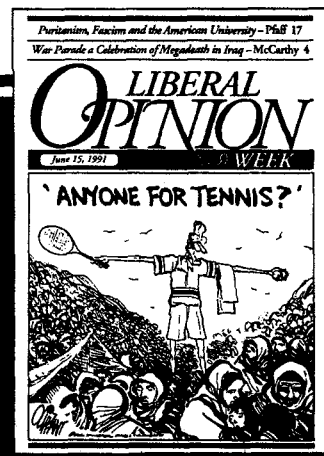
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EVENTS

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PUBLICATIONS

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THE AMERICAN NEO-NAZI MOVEMENT TODAY—Elinor Langer's exhaustively researched and chilling look at the growth of skinhead, Neo-Nazi and white supremacist hate groups with direct ideological links to the original Nazi movement. Langer concludes that something deeply disturbing is happening here—something every American should comprehend and confront. This issue of *The Nation* was originally published July 16/23, 1990. $4 per issue. Send check or money order to *The Nation*, Bulk Sales X, 72 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011, for call (212) 242-8400, ext. 206 for bulk prices.

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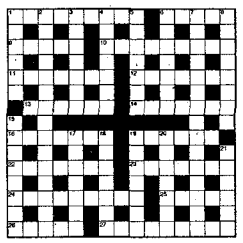

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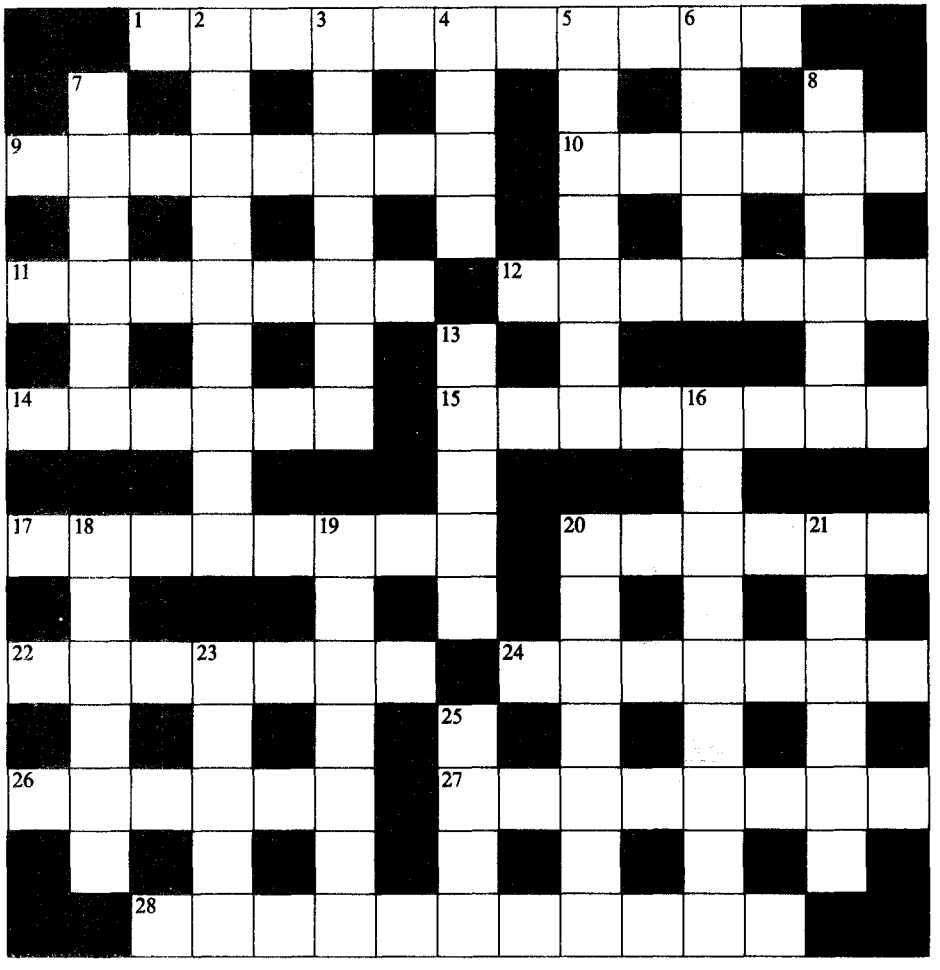
125th Anniversary Puzzle

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 and 10 Epic production, the anniversary of which we are celebrating—though they midwife it almost every week! (3,5,2,1,6)
9 An article on the smell has a point for Mr. Roosevelt, possibly. (8)
10 See 1
11 Not where the fox's classical opponent drank, though it might help one get a lift. (7)
12 Cheer up—it's a truly happy study! (7)
14 By the sound of it, bear 10 if a lady, McWilliams otherwise—both crusading types. (6)
15 One who especially wanted to see 20 across 28, where the soldiers might hang out . . . (8)
17 . . . being how to address the military political body, one that renounced allegiance. (8)
20 They weren't free to wash the ship around it. (6)
22 The orient has a couple of animals, said to be witty. (7)
24 A spell of liqueur maketh the heart grow fonder, yeth? (7)
26 Babies might like to—according to the old-fashioned saw. (6)
27 One pays them to fly and rise a far way out. (3,5)
28 Made free with how you might be called back, then possibly paid, etc. (11)

SEE LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION AT LEFT

DOWN

2 Only parasites would tell you the last thing the angler might want, if he has what it begins with. (9)
3 Fancy material ordered in the old way about a bird which is fabulous! (7)
4 Grass might be what makes the animal come up! (4)
5 Perhaps tamer, for an animal—one that carries things. (7)
6 Given a party that is doomed, by the sound of it. (5)
7 One might find a boring job with a motor disorder. (6)
8 Where a famous blade came from is also around the last of 13, mainly. (6)
13 Go up, being pulled by a rope, with what the wolf might have done. (5)
16 It's inane when I'm at the inside of it, and not moving at all! (9)
18 A little dog, and some other animal to love, though there may or may not be some strings attached. (6)
19 Leave a ring around? (7)
20 What might be associated with the worst of Russia is turned over by a Soviet official, once executed. (7)
21 Possibly there's a woman for you! (6)
23 Ogle a maiden, and you might see what's in your eye! (5)
25 It might be called in a hurry, a duty to one. (4)

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